

# CJR

COLUMBIA  
JOURNALISM  
REVIEW  
JANUARY/FEBRUARY  
1992#53

THE THOMAS  
HEARINGS:  
JUDGING  
THE PRESS

THE CHUTZPAH  
MAN VERSUS  
DEN OF THIEVES

SOUTHERN  
JOURNALISM:  
GONE WITH  
THE WIND?

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## RACIAL TENSION IN THE NEWSROOM



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AND DECENT"

From the founding editorial,  
1961



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# LETTERS

## THE NEW FREEDOM FIGHTERS

The November/December issue, with its focus on threats to the First Amendment, explains an awful lot. As a resident cynic, I have always followed Hunter Thompson's observation that "No matter how bad it gets, they're doing more than you think they are," but the reporting in that issue helps to explain who "they" actually are. And they have been doing more than even I thought they were.

In 1991, does it matter that Congress cannot pass laws "abridging the freedom of speech or of the press," when the executive can abridge those freedoms by order, the judiciary can abridge those freedoms by judgment, and the corporate/media monoliths can abridge those freedoms by financial pressure?

**LANCE L. ROCKEFELLER**  
LEDYARD, CONN.

## HARASSMENT IN THE NEWSROOM

Your Dart to *The Washington Post* [for its failure to point out that the author of an influential *Post* article deriding Anita Hill's allegations that Clarence Thomas had sexually harassed her had himself been accused of sexually harassing female colleagues, *CJR*, November/December] prompts me to write about a subject that still gives me nightmares.

Ms. Hill doesn't know me and it's unlikely we'll ever meet. But as I witnessed her life getting turned upside down and watched the media coverage of an issue no one seems to know how to handle, I cringed.

I know what Ms. Hill went through because I've been there. My own sexual harassment nightmares stem from events that unfolded in television newsrooms.

I was nineteen years old when I got my first job in TV news. Being in the right place at the right time earned me a low-level job in a network news bureau overseas. It was, I thought, my lucky break. By the time I had

been there a few months, I had faced an almost daily barrage of lewd remarks, propositions, and passes. Two of the three network correspondents, whom I had previously respected from afar, were among the most serious offenders. Frightened, confused, and not knowing what else to do, I remained silent. Until the day a senior producer cornered me in an office and grabbed me between the legs.

The next day, in tears, I talked to the bureau chief. To his credit, he took action immediately, holding a meeting with the men in the office and issuing a warning. For the next several weeks the mood among the men there was grim. My male colleagues, who had been jovial in the past, were suddenly giving me the silent treatment. Although the bureau chief had assured me my name wouldn't be used (and, to this day, I still believe he did not name me), I think my male colleagues suspected that I was the one who had blown the whistle and spoiled their so-called fun. I was young, new to the industry, and a constant target for their harassment. I'm sure they never thought I would speak up.

From that point on I was made to feel uncomfortable there, even by some female colleagues, who thought the sexually explicit joking was all in good fun. I left the bureau soon after, feeling I could no longer

**Columbia Journalism Review** (ISSN 0010 - 194X) is published bimonthly under the auspices of the faculty, alumni, and friends of the Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University. Volume XXX, Number 5 January/February 1992. Copyright © 1992 Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University. Subscription rates: one year \$18; two years \$32; three years \$45. Canadian and foreign subscriptions, add \$4 per year. Back issues: \$5.50. Please address all subscription mail to: Columbia Journalism Review, Subscription Service Department, P.O. Box 1943, Marion, Ohio 43302; (800) 669-1002. Editorial office: 700 Journalism Building, Columbia University, New York, N.Y. 10027; (212) 854-1881. Business office: 700A Journalism Building, Columbia University, New York, N.Y. 10027; (212) 854-2716. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing office. No claims for back copies honored after one year. National newsstand distribution: Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Road, Sandusky, Ohio 44870. Postmaster: send Form 3579 to Columbia Journalism Review, P.O. Box 1943, Marion, Ohio 43302.

take away glowing references from the correspondents and producers who had thought I was terrific until then.

It was a startling and upsetting entry into the world of television news, but I thought it would be the exception. Over the last nine years in this business, I have learned it is the rule.

I came back to the States and, after a variety of low-paying jobs, had my big chance at a small-market television job. It was an interview I'll never forget.

After showing me around the newsroom, the news director took me to the hotel room where I was staying so we could "watch the eleven o'clock news." As soon as we entered the room he pulled the drapes closed and lay down on the bed, his hands clasped behind his head, a wide grin across his face.

He urged me to get into something "more comfortable" and insisted that I change in front of him. I refused, grabbed a pair of jeans, and ran into the bathroom to change behind a locked door. I was terrified, confused, and shell-shocked. I was twenty-one years old and he was the first news director I'd ever met.

I nervously watched the news with him and ended up fighting off his advances. He said he would "give me the job anyway." After months of unemployment I was desperate. I needed a job. I'll never forget the next morning when I phoned my parents and my boyfriend in unashamed hysteria to let them know that I had accepted my first "real" TV news job.

I stayed there nine excruciating months before making a big jump to a medium market station headed up by a man highly respected in the industry. This news director was my idol. Working for him restored my confidence in the television news industry, in management, and in my future. Little did I suspect that a few years later this married man with a family would suddenly wrap his arm around me and press his mouth against mine. Later, he would beg me to spend the night with him, insisting I was one of only "a very few reporters" he "could trust."

My world fell apart. My journalistic hero had let me down. I told a close male colleague what had happened. He was shocked and sympathetic. Soon after, though, he told me to forget about it, fearing I'd wreck our hero's career and marriage. I said nothing.

This same news station housed a general manager who made frequent and explicit comments to female employees. He urged me to wear only dresses and skirts, "the shorter the better." When his son came to town to visit, he would pick up the phone and call a female reporter to fix up a date for his son. To my knowledge, I was the only

woman who declined. The others were shocked by my refusal. "You can't turn down the general manager," they said.

This time, luck was on my side. A female news director soon arrived and was very sympathetic to what I told her. She suggested that I document what the general manager did and said. After several months of doing so, with some trepidation as to its impact on my career, she took that documentation and brought it to corporate headquarters.

Soon after, I learned that this general manager was leaving — to a bigger and better position in a much larger market. I've often wondered who else he harassed, especially now that he's in an even higher position of authority.

Scarred from these experiences but determined to stay in the business, I made a major career move to one of the biggest markets in the country. Here, I was certain, there would be a higher level of professionalism and much less tolerance for sexual harassment. I was wrong.

Within a week my male colleagues were openly discussing my breast size, other physical characteristics, and publicly speculating on what I'd be like in bed. This time I

was determined to vigorously oppose this treatment from the start. "That's sexual harassment," I declared. "And I won't tolerate it. It has no place in this newsroom." Vocalizing my feelings ended up being one of the biggest mistakes of my life.

I was immediately labeled "a raving feminist," "a troublemaker," "a bitch." The aggressive competent news reporter my colleagues knew went home most nights and cried.

In order to avert career suicide I had to win over the men. That meant putting up with their comments for a year and a half, until I could no longer stand it. During that time when I played "the good ol' boys game" several male colleagues remarked on how much they liked the new me, one they perceived had simply loosened up. I ended up leaving that newsroom with good male friends and great references.

Tired of this trail of sexual harassment in every newsroom in which I had worked, I decided to drop down to a slightly smaller market in what I believed would be a more progressive part of the country. Again, I was wrong.

These days I still face a constant barrage of sexual remarks. Often one of my male

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superiors will whisper in my ear in a suggestive tone about how great I look. Another male manager "jokingly" stole a line from the recent film *Silence of the Lambs*. "Come closer," he said, "so I can smell your pussy."

So where does one turn when management is doing the harassing? I spent several months documenting it and confidentially phoned the station's lawyer, who was appalled and sympathetic. But he also informed me that all of the men I had mentioned had been through several seminars on sexual harassment in the workplace. Clearly, they had had little effect.

And I have witnessed how, when management behaves in such a manner, it sends a clear message to other male staffers that this is acceptable behavior.

My past experiences with sexual harassment in the television news industry have made me contemplate getting out of the business. But I do my job well and I love what I do. I dream of someday having to conquer only the challenges that arise *outside* the newsroom. They pale in comparison to what I face in my own workplace every day.

Now I find myself searching the country for female managers for whom I can work. There are very few. Today, I have visions of becoming a news director or station manager and creating a work environment for *all* employees that is free from sexual harassment.

I would love to sign my name to this, but I'm young and successful. With persistence and perhaps a bit of luck, I should have a bright future in this industry.

As for Anita Hill, I believe she's a modern-day heroine. She certainly is mine.

**NAME WITHHELD**

**IN RE: THOMAS ET AL**

Re: government secrecy and obfuscation, may I propose a new award?

It would go to the person who leaked that information which was of most value to the public in showing how government really works.

For 1991 my only nominee is whoever furnished *Newsday* and NPR with Anita Hill's statement.

**SAMUEL PENNINGTON**

EDITOR  
 MAINE ANTIQUE DIGEST  
 WALDOBORO, ME.

I doubt if you've ever had a letter with a longer gestation period than this one, but the



recent "coverage" of the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings finally forces me to write. I've read my husband's copies of *CJR* for several years, and we've had heated arguments over the effectiveness of the press. Let me point out here that by "press" I mean printed media and public radio. The only TV journalism with even a hint of credibility is Murphy Brown's fictional FYI.

During the Thomas confirmation hearings, reporters said with a straight face (or worse, failed to mention at all) that this staunchly conservative Catholic, raised by nuns, had no opinion on the abortion issue. Yet they climb all over a decade-old allegation of sexual harassment. When the question of more aid to unemployed Americans is raised, the president says it's a budget buster. Does anyone from your ranks immediately ask where the money to bail out the S&Ls comes from? Or what magic money-well yields the funds for the emperor's new invisible bomber that has no earthly reason to exist? No.

During the last two elections the press was virtually silent while lies were thrown

around like basketballs, but call Donna Rice in for a press conference and you guys are on her like wolves. You fail to ask government crooks the tough questions, but we see you asking the grieving mother how she feels at the accident scene.

I know I don't have the wherewithal to be a reporter. I don't think quickly enough on my feet to ask the right questions and get the right answers; thus I have put my faith in the media. But I must be quicker than a lot of you, to judge by the rotten quality of coverage I see on national and local issues. Tonight, an hour ago, I tuned in to a local TV station to get the final vote on Judge Thomas. The station gave the tally, then cut to a local exercise club (I swear to God this is true) to see what the "reaction was by the people on the Stairmaster." My husband called the station and got the newsroom, to be told that "a realistic cross-section of Milwaukee can be found in health clubs." This is hilarious to anyone whose ever been here, and is even funnier to lifelong residents of Milwaukee like my husband and me.

What happened to the hard-driving journalists who asked the tough questions? I don't know. Isn't there anyone out there who is willing to be a thorn in the side of the decision makers? I'm told that the media have to worry about selling advertising, ratings, and the like, and that's why major issues are quickly shuffled aside for more recent "newsworthy" events. I guess it is naive to think that if Americans got tired of hearing about things like the S&L crisis and the billions it's costing they'd start writing letters instead of just not buying papers. I guess the bottom line here is that journalists have sold their integrity to the major money holders and for the common man it's just death and taxes.

**PAULA JOHNSON**  
WAUWATOSA, WIS.

### **BANKNOTES NOTED**

In your November/December issue, you dart WMUR-TV and anchor Karen Appel for "mortgaging their credibility" in producing

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**KAREN APPEL**  
NEWS ANCHOR  
WMUR-TV  
MANCHESTER, N.H.

The editors reply: *We did go beyond the press release and Journal account by viewing BankNotes tapes. We also have a letter from the p.r. firm stating that "Bank of New Hampshire continues to be low-key in their promotion and advertising campaigns by only sponsoring the 30-second infomercial and assisting in the editorial direction and content."*

#### LOST . . . AND FOUND

Isn't it somewhat extreme to say, as Richard Kipling does in "A Lost Generation" (CJR, September/October) that the classes of '90 and '91 are "a lost journalistic generation ... [and] we are witnessing ... the wholesale squandering of a generation of talent...?"

Fifty years ago, I was a member of another generation of journalists whose start was delayed by circumstances. We postponed our contribution to journalism to go off and fight a war. A few enlisted or were called up just days after Pearl Harbor. I finished school and then served thirty-nine months — more than three of the best years of my life — in what was known as the Army Air Corps. A classmate of whom you may know, Elie Abel, served even longer, I think, in the Royal Canadian Air Force. Another member of the class of '42 who delayed his entry into the news field was Allan Otten, who later became a star at *The Wall Street Journal*.

The point is simply this: that the class of '42 produced its share of stars even if many of the gang had to wait a thousand days to launch their careers.

Getting started is never easy. Journalism is tough on beginners, whatever the condition of the world and the economy. Finishing up isn't easy, either. I'd hardly turned sixty when the company whose communications I directed decided to cut costs with a program of "early retirement" (which

my wife more accurately called "early firement"). So my career was shortened at both ends.

Still, I've written more in semi-retirement than for many years before. It's hard for me to doubt that, whatever the circumstances, writers will find a way to write.

**MAURI EDWARDS**  
SHORT HILLS, N.J.

*To be considered for publication in the March/April issue, letters should be received by January 21. Letters are subject to editing for clarity and space.*



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# CHRONICLE

## PUBLIC RADIO'S AIR WARS

Deregulation left commercial radio news gasping for air. In 1981, the Federal Communications Commission lifted the requirement that stations broadcast nonentertainment programming — otherwise known as news and public affairs. Since local news is expensive to produce and listeners to all-music stations seldom demand more than headlines, that change helped slowly strangle local radio reporting.

The big radio networks are still supplying national news, but executives fret that little of it actually gets on the air. "We put out an excellent product. Not much of it gets cleared," says Larry D. Cooper, vice-president of CBS News, Radio, which has the potential to reach nearly twenty-eight million listeners.

Commercial radio's troubles left an opening for public radio. National Public Radio, which produces and distributes *All Things Considered* and *Morning Edition*, among other programs, spotted the opening early on and dropped its alternative image for something more mainstream (see "Has Success Spoiled NPR?" *CJR*, September/October 1990). Its audience has grown steadily and is now up 18 percent from just a year ago.

And as more and more news junkies turn to public radio — a trend variously attributed to the gulf war, the deteriorating quality of TV news, and the lack of news elsewhere on radio — competition is heating up. The result: a polite but serious air war.

American Public Radio, NPR's chief rival in the distribution of public radio programming, now distributes a slew of



Harlee Little

alternatives to NPR news shows. When it was founded in 1983, APR agreed to stay out of the news business and concentrate on music and cultural programming — or at least that's how Bill Buzenberg, vice-president for news and information at NPR, remembers it. Stephen Salyer, who became APR's president in 1988, disagrees: "Nothing I've ever read suggests that APR made any promises about what it was going to get into."

Despite NPR's umbilical attachment to its member stations, station managers have always been free to affiliate with APR too. While they once had few choices, now they have more options than they know what to do with.

Building on the residual popularity of its gulf war national phone-in show, NPR launched *The Talk of the Nation* in November. The two-hour show is hosted four days a week by John Hockenberry, and on Fridays by Ira Flatow, who turns to health, technology, and science. One day each week is devoted to politics.

APR countered with *Presidential Choices*, a series of ninety-minute specials, to start this January and lead up to the 1992 elections. The program combines discussions of a hypothetical but realistic presidential decision with a national call-in segment.

Even without the new offerings, there

**NPR's *All Things Considered* is no longer the only game in town (host Linda Wertheimer, above).**

has been growing competition between older shows. *Monitor Radio*, a news show produced by The Christian Science Publishing Society and distributed domestically by APR, used to come in one-hour morning and afternoon drive-time offerings that seemed designed to fit neatly around NPR's most popular time-slots for *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*. NPR announced last summer it would add a half-hour to *All Things Considered* in the fall of 1992 and begin airing it an hour earlier, describing the change as a response to requests from station managers. But it looked as if the network was taking dead aim at the *Monitor* slot. APR and *Monitor*, meanwhile, had already taken the offensive by offering an additional seven A.M. airing of their *Early Edition* (carried by ninety of the 431 NPR member stations), thus going up directly against NPR's *Morning Edition*. "As long as public radio can only run one news program at a time, there is going to be competition," says David Creagh, *Monitor*'s executive producer.

Even the small and left-of-center Pacifica Radio News, which has been gaining listeners and respectability

## THEY PULLED NO PUNCHES

Tom Rosenstiel of the *Los Angeles Times*, the 1991 winner of the \$1,000 Lowell Mellett Award for Improving Journalism Through Critical Evaluation, has an awareness of social and technological trends "that provides a context for his insightful analysis of the influence of the press not only in politics but on society," the judges said.

The judges—Robert Clark, Christine Harris and Steve Klaidman—also gave Mellett special citations for analysis of news media performance to Fred Friendly and the public television/Columbia University Seminars on Media and Society; to Bob Keeler of *Newsday*; and to KVUE-TV, Austin, for work shaped by news director Carol Kneeland. They pulled no punches.

The deadline for the 1992 Mellett Award is March 1.

For entry information, write:

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recently, is weighing a "considerable expansion" that may include moving to a morning position or two broadcasts a day, according to Bill Thomas, director of program service. Pacifica has hired a national development director to raise money.

APR, meanwhile, has hired its first-ever vice-president for news. The network does not anticipate going beyond distribution and into production "at the present time," according to APR president Salyer. Still, APR had already taken at least a step toward production in 1989, when it provided more than half a million dollars in startup funding for its financial news program *Marketplace* (see "TV's Econ 101," *CJR*, July/August 1990). The program, produced by the University of Southern California Radio, is supported by General Electric, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, station user fees, and foundations.

APR also offers full shows from the venerable BBC World Service (see "The British are Coming," *CJR*, July/August, 1991), and from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), as well as Germany's *Deutsche Welle*.

With all these choices, stations are finding it easy to custom-design their news coverage. Many stations combine NPR, APR, and other offerings. But KUMD in Duluth, Minnesota, has dropped its NPR membership, which it says was too expensive. The cost of NPR programming is based on a formula related to a station's size and ability to pay. If KUMD had opted for the full NPR news package in fiscal year 1992, it would have paid \$47,332. Instead, the station created a package using the AP wire services (\$5,123), the radio AP News Network (\$4,903), Pacifica (\$3,000), and the BBC, which comes free with APR affiliation.

Economics plays an especially complex role in this public radio marketplace. NPR is quick to point out that the BBC and *Monitor Radio* each have an advantage — the first is subsidized by the British government, the second by the Christian Science Church. *Monitor* is a bargain for APR affiliates; the BBC is free.

NPR funding comes from member stations and from foundation, corporate,

and association grants. Despite a jump in member dues and contributions, the network suffered a \$1 million shortfall in fundraising last spring, forcing some painful cutbacks.

NPR's approach to newsgathering, which favors bureaus and full-time correspondents rather than stringers, is costly. But Jon Schwartz, program director for Boston's WBUR, which recently went to nearly fifteen hours of news a day, says that when it comes to U.S. news, "no one can compete with *All Things Considered* and *Morning Edition*."

NPR's Buzenberg contends that when stations like KUMD opt for the cheaper alternatives they are being short-sighted, taking away money that could go to produce solid but expensive NPR programming. He would like to see regular, dependable financial support for NPR news — possibly coming from a tax on the sale of commercial broadcasting licenses — that would free the network from its constant fundraising and quasi-advertising in the form of on-air credits to corporate underwriters.

"They [the stations] know they need us," he says. "We do the best job."

"The public needs more news, not less," counters APR's Salyer. "There's room and demand for other players."

Nicols Fox

Fox is a writer and editor who lives in Bass Harbor, Maine.

## YUGOSLAVIA CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE

In August, in the early weeks of Yugoslavia's civil war, Spanish reporter Hermann Tertsch and half a dozen colleagues were traveling through central Croatia when Serbian irregular troops stopped them, lined them up against a wall, and threatened to execute them because, they said, the reporters knew too much about military positions. The

journalists were ultimately freed, although one of their cars and all of their equipment were confiscated. "I was saying, 'I was not here. I promise you, I'll forget it,'" says Tertsch, the Eastern European correspondent for Madrid's *El Pais*, a major daily. "I was damned afraid. This war is so unpredictable. You have so many uncontrollable people."

What distinguishes the fighting between Croatian forces, Serbian irregulars, and the Serb-led Yugoslav army is confusion. Reporters have often strayed into the conflict, which heated up shortly after Croatia declared its independence last June.

Since then, seventeen journalists have died in Yugoslavia, according to the International Federation of Journalists. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists lists eighteen dead, including four non-Yugoslavs — one shot, two killed by mines, and one by mortar fire. Also, two Soviet journalists are missing and presumed dead.

"What we have is a very disorganized type of war," says Branko Salaj, Croatia's information minister.

Some reporters, including Askold Krushelnicky, who worked for Robert Maxwell's *European*, contend that Serb-backed forces target the press. "A section of Serbian fanatics has decided that Western journalists are sort of a fifth column for the Croatians, and that our coverage of the war is sympathetic and that we're part of the enemy," says Krushelnicky, a veteran war reporter. "Certainly, I've never been anywhere where so many journalists have lost their lives in such a short time."

Croatia's government, which has tried to use diplomacy to attain independence, hails reporters as messengers who bring word of the war to the outside world. For Serbia, Western reporters seem to be an annoyance. The rumor that both sides use cars marked "press" to ferry guns to the front adds to journalists' anxieties. Some reporters continue to blanket their cars with the words "press" and "TV"; others have stopped placing press markings on their cars altogether, feeling safer incognito.

The high risk of covering this war has failed to curb the number of reporters willing to do so. Though many come and go, more than 2,000 journalists,

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AP/Wide World

mostly European, have been accredited by the Croatian government since the conflict began. Some who stay are stringers. Most, like Tertsch, refuse to remain safely ensconced in their hotel rooms.

But even he has had second thoughts. Such misgivings came recently as he drove on a supposedly safe path through a minefield: "I was saying to myself,

### **An unidentified photographer on the run in Croatia**

"Hermann, is it necessary, so much color?"

Danica Kirka

*Kirka, a free-lance journalist from California, is living in Zagreb and covering the war for a number of publications.*

## **CHICAGO SUN-TIMES RISING?**

When Dennis A. Britton took over as editor of the floundering *Chicago Sun-Times* in December 1989, his mission was simple: "to restore credibility to the product," he says. By several measures, Britton has been a success. Daily circulation is up, and the paper looks and reads better. And, for what it's worth, a recent private *Sun-Times* survey of metropolitan Chicago newspaper readers showed that the paper's credibility has increased dramatically.

The *Sun-Times*'s image began to crumble back in 1984 when Rupert Murdoch bought it, then sold it two years later to his publisher, Robert Page, and a New York-based leveraged buyout firm, Adler & Shaykin. The

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# TRADEMARK CHECKLIST

Here is our second annual "Trademark Checklist," a handy guide to some of the best known trademarks. More than 600,000 trademarks are currently registered federally. This list is part of one compiled by the U.S. Trademark Association that correctly lists 1,000 trademarks and service marks with their generic terms.

The "Trademark Checklist" at right is a quick reference to help people in communications use trademarks accurately. Trademarks are valuable properties, which organizations spend billions of dollars developing and protecting. They are also important to consumers, allowing them to choose brands they recognize as having established levels of quality. Here are a few brief usage guidelines:

- Trademarks are proper adjectives and should be capitalized and followed by a generic noun or phrase
- Trademarks should not be pluralized
- Trademarks should not be used in possessive form
- Trademarks are never verbs

Following these guidelines will help you to prevent letters of complaint from trademark owners.

<b>Ace</b> elastic bandages	<b>Day-Glo</b> fluorescent paints
<b>Advil</b> analgesic/ibuprofen	<b>Day-Timer</b> planners
<b>Alka-Seltzer</b> antacid analgesic tablets	<b>Dictaphone</b> voice processing products
<b>"All the News That's Fit to Print"</b> (The New York Times)	<b>Disneyland</b> amusement park
<b>American Express</b> charge card services	<b>Disposall</b> food waste disposer
<b>AmEx</b> financial & charge card services	<b>Dixie</b> paper cups
<b>AMP</b> electrical connectors	<b>Dock-Sides</b> footwear
<b>Apple</b> computers	<b>Dolby</b> noise reduction systems
<b>Armor All</b> multi-purpose protectant	<b>Don't leave home without it.</b> (American Express)
<b>AstroTurf</b> synthetic turf	<b>Doritos</b> tortilla chips
<b>Atari</b> video games	<b>Dramamine</b> motion sickness preparation
<b>Autoharp</b> zither type musical instruments	<b>Drano</b> drain opener
<b>Bac-Os</b> imitation bacon bits	<b>Drygas</b> gasoline additive
<b>Baggies</b> plastic bag	<b>Dumpster</b> trash containers, hoisting units
<b>Band-Aid</b> adhesive bandages	<b>Dunkin' Donuts</b> doughnuts, restaurants
<b>Barbie</b> dolls & accessories	<b>Dustbuster</b> portable vacuums
<b>Bathinette</b> infant furniture	<b>Eames</b> chairs
<b>Betamax</b> videotape & recorders	<b>Ektachrome</b> film
<b>Blue Cross</b> health care insurance	<b>Elmer's</b> glue
<b>Blue Shield</b> health care insurance	<b>Equal</b> sweetener
<b>Bobcat</b> skid steer loaders, hydraulic excavators	<b>Erector</b> building sets
<b>Boogie</b> surfboards	<b>Exercycle</b> stationary bicycles
<b>Boxer Rebellion</b> clothing	<b>Express Mail</b> overnight & international delivery services
<b>Breathalyzer</b> alcoholic content measuring apparatus	<b>Fantastik</b> spray cleaner
<b>Bromo-Seltzer</b> antacid	<b>Federal Express</b> overnight & international delivery services
<b>B.V.D.</b> underwear	<b>Fiberglas</b> textiles, fibers, yarn, fabrics
<b>Cat Chow</b> pet food by Purina	<b>Flexible Flyer</b> sleds
<b>Caterpillar</b> tractors, machinery	<b>Formica</b> laminated plastic
<b>Chanel</b> clothing, accessories, perfume, cosmetics	<b>Freon</b> refrigerant
<b>Chap Stick</b> lip balm	<b>Frigidaire</b> appliances
<b>Chapman</b> locks	<b>Frisbee</b> flying discs
<b>Checker</b> automobiles (often used as taxis)	<b>Fudgsicle</b> fudge pops
<b>Cheez Doodles</b> cheese flavored corn puffs	<b>Geritol</b> vitamin supplement
<b>Chicken McNuggets</b> breaded chicken nuggets	<b>G.I. Joe</b> dolls
<b>Chiclets</b> chewing gum	<b>Gore-Tex</b> water repellant fabric, clothing
<b>Chlordane</b> insecticide	<b>Gunite</b> iron carbon alloy
<b>Cinch-Sak</b> plastic bags	<b>Handi-Wrap</b> plastic film
<b>Claymation</b> animated motion picture services	<b>Hanes</b> underwear, hosiery, activewear
<b>Clorox</b> bleach, prewash stain remover	<b>Hefty</b> plastic bags & plates
<b>Coffee-mate</b> non-dairy coffee creamer	<b>Heimlich Maneuver</b> anti-choking educational services
<b>Coke</b> soft drinks	<b>Hi-Liter</b> highlighting markers
<b>Coleman</b> stoves, lanterns	<b>Hide-A-Bed</b> sofas
<b>Colorization</b> film conversion services	<b>Hobie Cat</b> sailboats
<b>Converted</b> rice by Uncle Ben's	<b>Holiday Inn</b> hotels
<b>Cool Whip</b> dessert topping	<b>Hot Wheels</b> toy cars & accessories
<b>Corning Ware</b> baking/cooking ware	<b>Hula Hoop</b> plastic hoops
<b>Cracker Jack</b> candied popcorn	<b>Hush Puppies</b> footwear
<b>Crayola</b> crayons	<b>IBM</b> computer hardware & software
<b>Crock-Pot</b> electric cookers	<b>Interplak</b> plaque removal instrument
<b>Cup-A-Soup</b> instant soup mixes	<b>Jacuzzi</b> whirlpool baths
<b>Cybex</b> weight lifting equipment	<b>Jams</b> shorts, swim trunks
<b>Cyclone</b> chain link fences	<b>Jazzercise</b> dance exercise services
<b>Dacron</b> polyester fiber	
<b>Danskin</b> bodywear, hosiery	

**Jeep** all-terrain vehicles  
**Jet Ski** self-propelled water-skis  
**Jiffy** mail bags  
**Jockey** underwear  
**Johnson's** baby shampoo, oil, powder, lotion  
**Kentucky Fried Chicken** restaurants  
**Kitty Litter** cat box filler  
**Kleenex** tissues, napkins, disposable diapers  
**Kliegl** lights  
**Ko-Rec-Type** correction fluid  
**Kodachrome** photographic film  
**Kodacolor** film  
**Krazy Glue** adhesives  
**LaserJet** printers  
**La-Z-Boy** recliners  
**Land Cruiser** all-terrain vehicles by **Toyota**  
**Laundromat** self-service laundries  
**Letraset** graphic arts supplies  
**Levalor** venetian blinds  
**Lite** light beer by **Miller**  
**Little League** baseball sports services  
**Little Tikes** preschool toys  
**Loafer** shoes  
**Lotus 1-2-3** computer software  
**Lucite** acrylic resin, paints  
**Lycra** spandex fibers  
**Lysol** disinfectant sprays & cleaners  
**Mace** tear gas  
**Magic Marker** felt tip pens  
**Mailgram** message delivery services  
**MasterCard** credit card services  
**Medic Alert** bracelets, medical information services  
**Microsoft** computer software  
**Minute** instant rice & tapioca  
**Miracle-Gro** plant food  
**M&M's** candy  
**Motrin** analgesic/ibuprofen  
**Mr. Coffee** coffee maker  
**Muzak** background music systems  
**Nabisco** cookies, crackers, snacks  
**Nautilus** weight lifting equipment  
**Nestlé** chocolate  
**News You Can Use** (U.S. News & World Report)  
**Niblets** canned corn  
**Nikon** cameras  
**Nintendo** video game hardware, software & accessories  
**No-Cal** diet soft drinks  
**No Doz** drowsiness relief tablets  
**Novocain** local anesthetic  
**NutraSweet** sweetener  
**NYNEX** telecommunication services & equipment  
**Off!** insect repellent  
**One-A-Day** vitamins  
**Oreo** cookies  
**Pampers** disposable diapers  
**Para-Sail** parachutes  
**Pendaflex** file folders  
**Perrier** sparkling water  
**Philip Morris** tobacco products  
**Photostat** copiers  
**Ping-Pong** table tennis equipment  
**Plastic Wood** cellulose fibre filler  
**Play-Doh** modeling compound  
**Plexiglas** acrylic plastic  
**Polaroid** cameras, film  
**Portosan** portable toilets  
**Post-It** note pads, self-stick notes  
**Pyrex** glassware  
**Qiana** polyester fiber  
**Q-Tips** cotton swabs & balls  
**Quonset** prefabricated buildings  
**Quotron** electronic stock quotes  
**Realtor** real estate broker, member of the National Association of Realtors  
**Rolaids** antacid tablets  
**Rolex** watches  
**Rolodex** rotary card files  
**Rust-Oleum** rust preventive coatings  
**Sanka** decaffeinated coffee  
**Saran Wrap** plastic film  
**Scotch** transparent tape  
**Scotchgard** fabric protector  
**Selectric** electric typewriters  
**Sheetrock** plaster wallboard  
**Simoniz** car cleaning products  
**Smith Corona** typewriters, word processors  
**Sony** stereos, radios, televisions  
**Spackle** surfacing compound  
**StairMaster** exercise equipment  
**Stetson** hats  
**Styrofoam** plastic foam (Note: Cups and other serving items are not made of **Styrofoam** brand plastic foam.)  
**Technicolor** motion picture processing services  
**Teflon** fluorocarbon resins, non-stick coatings  
**Thermopane** windows  
**Thinsulate** thermal insulation  
**Tiffany** jewelry, crystal, silverware  
**Tofutti** tofu-based food products  
**Toll-House** chocolate morsels  
**Top-Sider** deck shoes by **Sperry**  
**Tums** antacid tablets  
**Tylenol** analgesic/acetaminophen  
**U-Haul** truck rental services  
**Universal** weight lifting equipment  
**Uzi** machine guns  
**Vaseline** petroleum jelly, lip balm, skin lotion  
**Velcro** hook & loop fasteners  
**View-Master** slide & movie viewers  
**Visa** credit card services  
**Vise-Grip** tools, clamps  
**Walkman** portable stereos by **Sony**  
**Weed Eater** lawn trimmers  
**Weight Watchers** food products, weight reduction centers  
**White-Westinghouse** appliances  
**Windbreaker** clothing, jackets  
**Windex** glass cleaner  
**Windsurfer** sailboards  
**WordPerfect** word processing software  
**World Series** baseball entertainment services  
**X-Acto** knives  
**Xerox** photocopiers, copies, computer systems  
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**3M** carpet protector  
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sales started, then accelerated, a miserable downward slide for the paper, which used to be considered one of America's best tabloids. Through its newsroom came a series of editors who were unable either to work with Page or to breathe some fire into the newspaper (see "Hard Times at the *Sun-Times*," *CJR*, July/August 1988). As morale and circulation sank, dozens of staff members quit.

After Page himself was squeezed out, the paper was badly in need of a savior. Then came Britton, who rode his white horse in from the West, where he'd been deputy managing editor of the *Los Angeles Times*. In two years, he and his new team of middle-level editors have:

- improved and stabilized the look of the paper. Local, national, and international news is grouped more logically, the headline typestyle has been changed to a more serious-looking font, and the front page is calmer than its Murdoch/Page-era hodgepodge of screaming headlines and multiple refers. Modern graphics — information boxes,

charts — have enhanced the paper's readability, most notably in its coverage of the Persian Gulf war, when the *Sun-Times* held its own against the jumbo newshole of the *Chicago Tribune*.

- developed a folksier style that includes more features and columnists, and an approach to local enterprise reporting that Britton describes as bringing to life "the people that statistical analysis misses." This worked well last spring in a powerful report on the collapsing infrastructure of the Chicago school system and in a dramatic summer series focusing on the details and aftermath of several of Chicago's many shooting deaths. But some staffers worry that this emphasis on personal impact is "softer" than Chicago journalism's traditional aggressive, long-term, naming-the-names investigations.

In any event, Britton's style has helped the *Sun-Times* to two six-month daily circulation gains in a row — the first double increase since the early 1980s. In Sunday circulation, however, the tabloid is still getting clobbered by

the *Tribune* — 537,000 to 1.1 million. And despite a clever ad-selling technique, combining a *Sun-Times* buy with suburban papers that it owns, overall advertising is still down in the weak economy, trailing the *Tribune*. President Sam McKeel said bluntly in late fall that "we do not see any turnaround yet." In December, the paper reduced its workforce by about two dozen.

What about morale? A change in health insurance carriers last year was made with almost no advance warning, irritating many employees. Clumsy handling of a county government reporter's forced resignation in November over conflict-of-interest charges upset many in the newsroom and resulted in a formal Newspaper Guild grievance. Most significantly, many reporters are still smarting over rough contract negotiations that ended in October and resulted in no first-year raise at all — just a small signing bonus.

"Britton has focused the paper and given it cohesion," says reporter Charles Nicodemus, a long-time Guild

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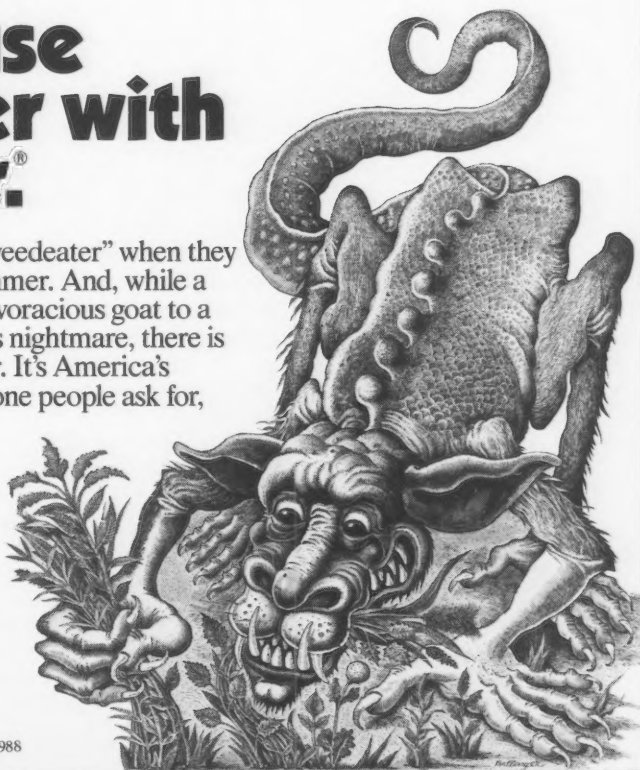
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activist. But, he adds, "it is just beyond argument that staff morale can have a significant impact on the paper's capacity to outthink and outthrust the *Tribune*." Given the bumpy negotiations, he says, morale is still a question mark.

Jon Ziomek

*Ziomek, a former Sun-Times reporter, is director of graduate editorial programs at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism.*

## BRAZIL LAND REFORM OF THE AIRWAVES

Leo Tomaz is the driving force behind Rádio Reversão. That's 106.5 on your FM dial on the outskirts of São Paulo, where the homes of rural immigrants and their upwardly mobile children sprawl across what is called the East Zone.

It was 106.5 until April 9 anyway. That morning, federal police arrested Tomaz for operating a station without a license and confiscated Reversão's equipment. If convicted, Tomaz faces six months to two years in prison.

Far from being treated like a criminal, however, Tomaz found himself being treated like something of a hero. Tomaz's lawyer is a former head of the São Paulo State Justice Department; the city councils of São Paulo and a handful of smaller municipalities passed supportive resolutions; and local labor groups — including the São Paulo Journalists Union and the São Paulo Broadcasters Union — defend Reversão. Mainstream media coverage made Tomaz's case a mini-cause célèbre. And he was elected head of the newly formed São Paulo State Association of Free Radio Stations (ARLESP), a hodgepodge of stations — twenty-five members so far, he says — with a common goal: "Land reform of the airwaves."

The organizing hasn't relieved the

pressure, however. Police shut down two more East Zone stations in August.

ARLESP's land-reform metaphor is more than poetic. The legacy of colonial land grants, distributed to the powerful and the connected, shaped Brazilian society, and the country's modern presidents are recreating this phenomenon in the distribution of electronic properties — radio and TV licenses:

- According to the daily *Jornal da Tarde*, political criteria were a leading consideration for the country's first post-dictatorship civilian president, José Sarney, as he distributed 1,203 radio and television concessions between 1985 to 1990. The legacy: 130 of today's 584 members of congress own at least one radio or television station.

- The newsweekly *Isto É/ Senhor* reports that the owners of the ninety-five cable television concessions awarded by Sarney and current President Fernando Collor de Mello "are, almost all, friends of the powerful." The magazine reports that Sarney awarded himself a cable concession three days before leaving Brasília.

- By the end of August, the Collor administration was expected to award concessions for some 1,500 electronic media outlets, predominantly radio stations. According to the daily *Folha de São Paulo*, nearly 1,000 applications had been filed by the end of July, "most of them by members of congress."

With so many plums handed out to so many politicians, leftovers are slim pickings.

Meanwhile, after a decade of growth, Brazil's alternative, illegal electronic media have emerged from a student-activist ghetto to establish themselves as professionally operated — if not profitable — voices for everything from popular movements to heavy metal headbangers to evangelical Christians. "We are not pirates," rings their refrain.

Free radio, they say, is distinct from pirate broadcasting because it seeks to forge and cultivate links in the community it serves, eschews clandestinity, and maintains a regular broadcast schedule. Most of ARLESP's member stations are powered in the ten-to-fifteen watt range (sixty watts or less is the membership rule), giving them a broadcasting radius of five to ten kilometers.

The free-radio movement began to flower after the iron grip of Brazil's military dictatorship, imposed in 1964, began to loosen. The first station with regularly scheduled broadcasts, Rádio Xilik, emerged with civilian rule in 1985, propelled by political activists and students and faculty at São Paulo's Catholic University. There is no telling how many free radio stations are broadcasting in the country these days. The most reliable estimates, by the television network Manchete and an ARLESP study, put the number in the 150 to 200 range.

Today's radio hotbed is in São Paulo's East Zone and nearby suburbs, where programming is as lively and diverse as a tag team match: Rádio Esperança keeps a strict evangelical format; Rádio Objetiva is one of a handful of "mixed" stations, juxtaposing popular *sertaneja* music (Brazilian country) and community service with evangelical programming; Reversão likes locally produced rock spiced with poetry readings, environmental and astronomy shows, and programming for and by women, blacks, and young people. The common thread is airwave access for the electronically dispossessed, what Rádio Xilik founder Marcelo Masagao calls "marginalized groups." "This is not a station for bishops," says Esperança founder Wilson Perez. "We are striving for equality."

The technical requirements of current law regulating radio effectively require a 300-watt transmitter, an expensive pipe dream for these self-sustaining nonprofit stations. Is there any alternative to electronic civil disobedience? Some ARLESP members maintain that it is best to remain illegal, in order to avoid being swallowed up by big commercial networks. But most disagree, and ARLESP plans to send Tomaz to Brasília to lobby for legalization. Italy could be a model; that country's parliament recently approved legislation that distinguishes between commercial and community radio, reserving 25 percent of frequencies for the latter.

Bill Hinchberger

*Hinchberger, who lives in São Paulo, writes for a number of business and general interest publications.*



# HOW ARE WE DOING?

Journalists experiencing any shortage of self-esteem are advised to steer clear of public opinion polls about journalism until the malady passes. According to surveys by Times Mirror and The Gallup Organization between 1985 and 1989, for example, a majority of Americans believe that the press as a whole is biased and negative, not to mention influenced by powerful organizations and unwilling to admit mistakes.

What does the press think of itself? CJR conducted a random survey of 100 readers who are journalists, asking five of the same questions about the press that Times Mirror did. The results (right) suggest that journalists see something far more positive when they examine their work than the public does when it reads the paper or tunes into the news.

In addition to the five Times Mirror questions, the journalists surveyed were asked about two recent specific stories that have engendered press criticism. A majority, 74 percent, found that the "press's handling of the leak that broke the Anita Hill story was fair and reliable," but only 31 percent found that coverage of the William Kennedy Smith rape allegations "has been fair and without bias."

How do journalists explain the public's opinions? A number of those surveyed were asked for their on-the-record answers; here's a sampling:

Jill Porter (*Philadelphia Daily News*): The public completely misunderstands what we do.... They don't appreciate the voice we give them.

Charles Horner (free-lance writer): When the public sees news reported badly, in an incomplete fashion, the two quickest labels that they will place on it are "biased" and "unethical." But what they are actually seeing is journalists attempting to tell a story without adequate background to do so.

James Smith (*The News-Times*, Danbury, Connecticut): We deserve the negative rating for a very basic reason: we do not

explain ourselves enough, and thus are seen as mysterious, arrogant, and unapproachable.

Anthony Brown (*The Charlotte Observer*): By nature, people who write about other people are opportunists. In most cases, journalists are just interested in the story. That's the nature of the business.

Michael Romaner (*Florida Times-Union*,

Jacksonville): When you think about what we give the reader for 25 cents a day, less than the cost of a Hershey Bar, I sometimes wonder what the public expects out of us.

Carol Shirley (*Los Angeles Times*): It is a typical kill-the-messenger syndrome that is fueled by the government and makes us too timid.

David Rynecki

Rynecki is an intern at CJR.

## Mirror Image

**In presenting the news dealing with political and social issues, do you think that news organizations deal fairly with all sides, or do they tend to favor one side?**

	PRESS	PUBLIC
(a) deal fairly with all sides	77%	28%
(b) tend to favor one side	18%	68%
(c) don't know	5%	4%

**In general, do you think news organizations are pretty independent, or are they often influenced by powerful people and organizations?**

(a) pretty independent	59%	33%
(b) often influenced by powerful organizations	37%	62%
(c) don't know	4%	5%

**In general, do you think news organizations get the facts straight, or do you think that their stories and reports are often inaccurate?**

(a) get the facts straight	73%	54%
(b) inaccurate	22%	44%
(c) don't know	5%	2%

**Do you think that news organizations have a willingness to admit mistakes or do they try to cover up mistakes?**

(a) willingness to admit mistakes	66%	34%
(b) try to cover up mistakes	16%	55%
(c) neither/can't say	18%	11%

**In general, do you think news organizations pay too much attention to good news, too much attention to bad news, or do they mostly report the kinds of stories they should be covering?**

(a) too much attention to good news	3%	1%
(b) too much attention to bad news	27%	60%
(c) report stories they should be covering	66%	35%
(d) don't know	4%	4%

The questions come from Times Mirror/Gallup polls, as do the answers from the general public. The answers from the press come from a CJR survey of 100 readers who are journalists.



## FOLLOW-UP

# MORE 'SEDITION' IN KENYA

As readers of "Sedition in Kenya" (CJR, January/February 1991) will recall, *The Nairobi Law Monthly*, Kenya's liveliest and most controversial publication, has drawn heavy fire. Its editor-in-chief, Gitobu Imanyara, was arrested twice during 1990 and the magazine was banned by Kenya's attorney general that September.

There have been major developments in this story over the last year. Last March, Imanyara was arrested and charged yet again with sedition for another issue of the *Law Monthly*. In this case, the "seditious" material included publication of the manifesto of



Ray Borner/NTV Pictures

### Imanyara, free-press crusader

a newly announced opposition party and an editorial exposing the disproportionate allocation of state jobs to members of president Daniel arap Moi's Kalenjin ethnic group. The U.S. State Department, members of Congress, human rights groups, and journalists protested Imanyara's arrest. Last May, a newly appointed Kenyan attorney general

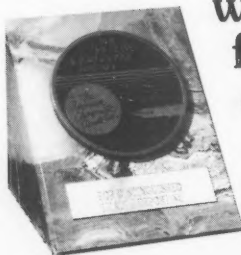
announced that both sets of sedition charges against him were being dropped and that the banning order on the magazine was being lifted.

As the movement for restoration of multi-party democracy intensified in Kenya, Imanyara remained in the forefront. On November 15, the day before a scheduled pro-democracy rally, he was arrested again and charged with violating the Public Order Act for having published information on an allegedly "illegal" meeting. Imanyara was released on bail four days later, and he returned to the *Monthly's* offices to work on the next issue. In December, bending to international and domestic pressure, President Moi agreed to scrap one-party rule and hold elections, although many Kenyans worry that the elections won't be fair.

*Richard Dicker*

*Dicker is a lawyer who has monitored human rights in Kenya for Africa Watch.*

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# DARTS AND LAURELS

◆ **DART** to the *Los Angeles Times*, for the unfurled hype (and furred self-interest) in its saturated coverage of "The Umbrellas of Christo," a \$26 million project in which some 1,760, 488-pound, twenty-foot-tall yellow umbrellas were sprinkled along an eighteen-mile stretch of highway through California's scenic Tejon Pass. As had been accurately forecast in the October issue of *Los Angeles Magazine*, the *Times* provided a most favorable climate for the Bulgarian artist and his bumbershoots — some thirteen articles and nine photos in the twenty days between October 8 and October 27 (when one of the umbrellas, uprooted by wind, caused a fatal injury, bringing the exhibit abruptly to a close), and some five more accident-related stories and five more photos between October 27 and November 1 (when a worker was electrocuted during the dismantling of Christo's sister project in Japan). Despite the deluge, however, nowhere in its coverage did the *Times* see fit to mention that 30 percent of the stock of the Tejon Ranch Company — on whose 270,000 acres of investable, developable land half of the umbrellas were installed — happens to be owned by the Times Mirror Company, the paper's parent. Nor did it report on the prescience with which a TRC vice-president had told *Los Angeles Magazine*, "[Christo's Umbrellas] will bring us the kind of publicity we couldn't pay for."

◆ **DART** to the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, for rolling out a barrel of censored speech. When political editor Steve Luttner drafted a Sunday column in which he questioned the value to the city of the Budweiser Grand Prix and criticized the mayor for spending too much time and money keeping sports promoters happy while letting less frothy problems brew, *PD* editor Thom Greer had the column dumped. (The paper has been a regular sponsor of the annual summer race.)

◆ **LAUREL** to *The Washington Times* and reporter Patrick Boyle, for "Scouts Honor," a well-prepared series on the sexual abuse of children by volunteer Boy Scout leaders. Picking up on a recent lawsuit involving a scoutmaster who had molested a Virginia boy, Boyle pursued a paper trail of more than a thousand newspaper articles and tens of thousands of pages of court records — and discovered a disturbing pattern of similar cases in all fifty states. Indeed, while the organization's officials acknowledge from two to ten reports of sexual abuse each year, Boyle found that on an average of once a week over the past two

decades, somewhere in America a Cub Scout, Boy Scout, or Explorer has reported being sexually abused by his leader. Six months in the making, Boyle's investigation also drew on painstaking computer analysis and painful interviews with victims and their families, as well as with molesters, scout officials, sex-abuse experts, and lawyers. His May 20-24 series comprised some thirty-six stories and charts, including a state-by-state listing of the 416 cases between 1971 and 1990 in which leaders were arrested or banned from scouting for the sexual abuse of scouts. The series also reported on the organization's current efforts to improve volunteer selection and educate the troops.

◆ **DART** to the Huntsville, Alabama, *Times*, and another to the Arizona *Daily Star*, for the indiscriminate use of discriminating facts. The *Times*'s November 15 headline over its front-page lead story about an offer by the Huntsville city council to two Huntsville residents in settlement of a 1989 police brutality case: **BLACKS GET \$100,000 FROM CITY**. The *Star*'s gratuitous detail in an October 28 piece on how Korean immigrants are bringing new competition to the retailing scene in Nogales, Arizona: "The city's established business community [is] composed mostly of chain stores and Jewish-owned shops...."

◆ **DART** to KIRO-TV, Seattle, for paying too much attention to the roar of the crowd — and fumbling the journalistic ball. The station's two-part investigative series on the University of Washington's football team was kicked off in good style on November 20, with reporter Mark Sauter scoring the low graduation rate of UW players (three out of ten, according to latest figures, putting it at the bottom of the Pacific 10 Conference). The segment also carried a commentary by Lou Guzzo criticizing the university for refusing to tackle the issue and calling on the state's board of regents to investigate the "disgrace." The second part of the series, however, which was to deal with outstanding warrants against seven present and former Huskies for such unsportsmanlike actions as driving without a license and failing to make restitution to a victim of assault, almost didn't get off the ground. First, on November 21, news director John Lippman sidelined it temporarily after the station received a flood of angry phone calls from Huskies fans concerned about the negative impact on team morale just days before a crucial play-

off game. Next, on November 22, station c.e.o. Ken Hatch retired it from the lineup after a huddle with top university officials, including the president, on the UW campus. (Hatch also turned his producer's research notes over to the university.) Finally, after newsroom morale had dropped to an unprecedented low; after Sauter had resigned; after yards of unfavorable publicity in such other area media as the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and the *Tacoma Morning News Tribune*, Hatch suddenly changed signals: on November 27, he aired the second half of the series.

◆ **DART** to the Newport, Rhode Island, *Daily News*, for a less-than-lofty lesson in situational ethics. In a November 5 column, editor David B. Offer self-righteously (albeit rightly) explained why, as past ethics chairman of the national Society of Professional Journalists, whose ethics code he had helped to write, and as present vice-chairman of the National Ethics Committee of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association, he could not accept — as thousands of other journalists had accepted — an invitation to an all-expenses-paid fun-filled weekend to celebrate a Disney World birthday. Two days later, his paper's front page carried a glowing account of the great success of the Newport County Convention and Visitors Bureau in enticing New York travel writers to the area with a "low-key" pitch that included a luncheon at the New York Yacht Club, gift bags of local wine, and an open invitation to visit Newport at no expense. "Last year," the article reported with evident satisfaction, "a similar program led to major stories and photo layouts on Newport in several major magazines" which, had they been paid for advertisements, would have cost "more than \$1 million." On this local exercise in journalistic seduction, ethicist Offer was silent.

◆ **LAUREL** to the Wilmington, Delaware, *News Journal* and environmental reporter Merritt Wallick, for an industrial-strength investigation of the Wilmington-based Du Pont company and its less-than-pure record over the past fifty years in overselling the safety and underplaying the dangers of the chlorofluorocarbon known as Freon 113, the most popular refrigerant/solvent in the company's multibillion-dollar CFC line. Drawing on thousands of pages of documents, as well as on interviews with Du Pont officials, scientists, regulators, lawyers, and workers, Merritt's four-part series (August 25-28) showed how Du Pont had misrepresented the facts behind its claims of safety for a product that was, in fact, killing people. The

series also revealed that while, in accordance with recent legislation, CFC production will cease by the year 2000, the company is pushing a replacement product which poses a potential threat to the environment — but which is cheaper for Du Pont to produce than a less harmful alternative. For a contrasting approach to covering the company in a company town, see *The Omaha World-Herald's* page 1 story (Sunday, June 9) on the Nucor Corporation, the highly productive, highly profitable Wall Street darling whose two Norfolk, Nebraska, plants make it the community's largest employer. In an explicit response to earlier reports in *The Charlotte Observer*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and *The Wall Street Journal* on the alarmingly high accident-related death rate among Nucor's workers — the highest in the steel industry since 1980 and more than double the industry average — the *World-Herald* weighed in with an image-polishing piece on the benevolence of the company, the contentment of its workers, and — notwithstanding an OSHA finding against Nucor to the contrary — the carelessness of an employee who (the piece strongly implied) has caused his own accidental death.

◆ **DART** to the *Contra Costa Times*, for watered-down news. In the midst of California's unrelenting five-year drought, a list of the top 100 residential consumers of East Bay Municipal Utility District's water — most of whom turned out to live in the affluent suburbs of Contra Costa county and to have been using more than fifteen times the 325 gallons used by the average EBMUD customer — was reluctantly released by the utility on October 3 (thanks to a lawsuit filed by the *Oakland Tribune*). But while the *Trib* and other area news media played the story straight, the *Times* diluted it with a defensively skeptical twist, headlining its page-one story *CONTRA COSTANS DOMINATE, BUT MAY NOT BE WASTERS*. The lead of the piece referred to "complaints of inaccuracy and invasions of privacy"; one pulled quote planted the possible excuse of a "leaking pipe" while another maintained "'It's not right to disclose what someone is using. It is the customer's home and their property.'" And one rather interesting fact did not surface in the piece at all: that the twenty-ninth name on the list, with usage of 5,000 gallons a day, was that of Dean S. Leshner, publisher and chairman of the *Contra Costa Times*.

*This column is compiled and written by Gloria Cooper, CJR's managing editor, to whom nominations should be addressed.*

# Living with Diversity

*Talking it through in three newsrooms*

A few days after she arrived at *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, Brenda Breaux recalls, a couple of white colleagues filled her in on the personalities in the newsroom. When they got around to another black reporter, Breaux says, it was made clear to her that "this person was not pulling his weight. It made me feel like I'd better prove myself right off, because they've already made a judgment on another minority." Breaux admits that her fellow black reporter may not be "the best or the hardest worker," but, she adds, "there are other people here who are not the best or hardest workers and I didn't hear about them and they are white."

Breaux's experience illustrates one of the many challenges newspapers face as they work to diversify their staffs. Interviews with dozens of journalists at three papers that are working to increase minority representation — *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, the *Portland Oregonian*, and *The Hartford Courant* — suggest that, while newspapers are meeting with some success in creating a multicultural newsroom, their efforts are creating swirls of controversy and

tensions that management has yet to learn to cope with.

Journalists of all colors agree that race plays a role in a variety of newsroom situations. Less predictably, the vast majority also agree that their paper is not doing enough to create a multicultural environment, especially on the management level. But even in areas on which there was general agreement, opinions and perceptions vary considerably. Take, for example, the question of what role race plays in hiring and advancement decisions, and whether a double standard, based on ethnicity, has been created.

Asked about the role race plays in hiring at the Hartford paper, staff members who differ racially and who are positioned at various levels within the newsroom hierarchy offer these comments.

"Sure, you're going to get a break because you're a minority, because newspapers need to bring more minorities into the newsroom," says Greg Morago, an assistant state editor who is of Hispanic and Native American descent.

Cecilia Préstamo, a Cuban-American on the *Courant's* photo staff, says, "I guess they were looking for a Hispanic

photographer. I think it's no coincidence that the person I replaced was a Cuban photographer."

Mike Waller is editor of the *Courant*, and he is white. "We're willing to take a few more risks with people of color," he says, "but no one falls into the category of hiring someone just because they're a minority."

Some white reporters at other papers might challenge statements like Waller's. Brian Cour, a sports desk editor at *The Oregonian*, says unequivocally, "People with above-average skills are being passed over in favor of people with marginal skills. You don't have the most talented people doing the job." Kevin O'Hanlon, a reporter at *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, says, "When a new black reporter comes into the newsroom, I'm sure there are some people thinking they would like to see his résumé."

LaTricia Ransom, a copy editor at *The Oregonian*, finds herself thinking more positively. "I know my race and my sex had something to do with getting hired here," she says, "but they didn't hire me because I was black. They hired me because I was black and good."

Several members of minority groups

*Stephen J. Simurda is a free-lance writer who lives in Northampton, Massachusetts.*

by Stephen J. Simurda



spoke to this point, adding that they find it distressing that white colleagues tend to conclude that, because race may have played a role in management's decision to hire a member of a minority group, the new person is not really qualified.

"That implies that white reporters have cornered the market on competence," observes D. Orlando Ledbetter, a sportswriter at the *Enquirer*, who is black.

Many of those interviewed are convinced that when editors and colleagues evaluate the work of a journalist of color, race is factored in. "If a black reporter fails, they're likely to notice their race. If a white reporter fails, that's not the issue," says Bill Keveney, a transportation writer at the *Courant*, who is white.

Scipio Thomas, a reporter at the *Enquirer*, who is black, puts it differently: "An error on my part is poor journalism. An error on a white man's part is just a typo."

And because race often plays a role in how editors and colleagues view their work, journalists of color say that they frequently feel pressured to represent not just the minority group of which they are a part, but minority groups generally.

"We can't just be here and do our job half well," says Wade Nkrumah, an *Oregonian* sportswriter, who is black. "All of us who come in here have to set this sterling example." Or, as Stan Simpson of *The Hartford Courant*, expressed it, "We don't have the luxury of being mediocre."

For Rob Parker, an *Enquirer* sports writer, who is black, that is one of the key obstacles to the creation of a multicultural environment in the newsroom. "This business will only turn around when mediocre black reporters are hired," he says.

*Courant* editor Mike Waller seems to agree. "We've been hiring average,

## UNEQUAL TERMS

BY LOUIS HARRIS

Over the past year, many of the major print media have introduced the terms "preference" or "racial preference" as a substitute for "affirmative action" when describing programs designed to help women, members of minority groups, and the disadvantaged in an effort to compensate for past discrimination. In fact, the terms are not interchangeable.

Ever since the landmark *Bakke* decision of 1978 the use of racial or ethnic quotas in affirmative action has been declared illegal and unconstitutional. As Justice Lewis Powell, who cast the deciding vote, wrote, the Court "had never approved a classification that aids persons perceived as members of relatively victimized groups at the expense of other innocent individuals in the absence of judicial, legislative, or administrative findings of constitutional or statutory violations."

However, in another part of the same decision Justice Powell upheld the legitimacy and desirability of affirmative action programs provided they did not have rigid quotas. This meant that schools could take race or ethnic background into account when they admitted students. A year later, the *Weber* decision extended this concept to the employment area.

Thus, affirmative action has become a concept that is very much part of the law of the land. Over the past dozen years our firm has polled on affirmative action, and has found majorities of between 61 percent and 75 percent of the adult public favor such an approach.

Last year, when the media began using "racial preference" instead of "affirmative action," I decided to measure the difference that the two phrases might make in public attitudes.

We asked the same cross-section of 1,250 adults the following questions:

— "Do you favor or oppose federal laws requiring affirmative action programs for minorities in employment and in education, provided there are no rigid quotas?"

and

— "Do you favor or oppose federal

laws requiring racial preference programs for minorities in employment and education, provided there are no rigid quotas?"

The results were revealing. In response to the first question, 70 percent said they favored affirmative action, with 24 percent opposing. The response to the second question was very different, with 48 percent opposing and 46 percent favoring laws requiring racial preference programs.

We then went out among another cross-section of 1,250 adults and asked, "When you hear the phrase 'affirmative action' what comes to mind? What else?" And, "When you hear the phrase 'racial preference' what comes to mind? What else?"

Both yielded margins of 7-1, the difference being that "affirmative action" came up 7-1 positive, while "racial preference" came up 7-1 negative. To the people interviewed, affirmative action connoted such positive things as "doing something good for people who have not had an equal chance," "equal opportunities for minorities regardless of color or creed," "civil rights for all races," "making equal opportunities for everyone." By contrast, "racial preference" was taken to mean "reverse discrimination," "racism by minorities," "hiring minorities who are unqualified or who have lower qualification," "hiring minorities to meet strict quotas."

In short, "affirmative action" implies what Justice Powell and a majority of the Court envisaged in the *Bakke* and *Weber* decisions. "Racial preference," on the other hand, implies setting quotas by race, which *Bakke* and *Weber* clearly outlawed. Thus, using "racial preference" in news accounts as a substitute for "affirmative action" can only suggest to readers, not that an attempt is being made to right past wrongs, but that an injustice is taking place.

Louis Harris is chairman of Louis Harris & Associates, the polling organization, and author of "The Harris Poll," a syndicated column.





Kelly Johnson



Richard Messina

**On the hiring line: William A. Hilliard (top), editor of *The Oregonian*; Michael Waller (above, center) editor of *The Hartford Courant*; LaTricia Ransom (right), a copy editor at *The Oregonian*, who says, "They didn't hire me because I was black... [but] because I was black and good."**



Kelly Johnson

*"We don't have the luxury of being mediocre"*

mediocre white males all our lives. So what's wrong with hiring a few average, mediocre black reporters?"

It's a good question, but as things presently stand the average black reporter is having a hard time being accepted by his or her average white colleagues and being treated like anyone else by management. Many people feel that things won't improve until there are a lot more nonwhite journalists in the newsroom.

Max Frankel, executive editor of *The New York Times*, addressed this point at an October 1990 panel discussion on men and women in the media. "We have reached the critical mass with women, and how do I know? I know that when a woman screws up, it is not a political act for me to go fire her.... I cannot honestly say that with some of our blacks.... They're still precious ... so you tolerate a little more shortcoming. It's when you can look across the room and say indiscriminately, So-and-so's good and So-and-so's lousy, and you don't see their color or their sex that you know you've solved one part of your problem."

While the challenge faced by the three dailies is the same — to achieve newsroom diversity — each paper's experience in dealing with that challenge is unique. An important determinant is the setting.

*The Hartford Courant* is based in a city with a large black and Hispanic population, but circulates widely in dozens of suburban, mostly white communities. It maintains bureaus throughout the state. Virtually all hiring is done into these bureaus and several of the people brought into them in recent years have been journalists of color. A walk through the main newsroom in Hartford, however, leaves the impression that there are very few nonwhite journalists working at the *Courant*.

This may be one reason that there is little evidence of resentment by white journalists toward their nonwhite colleagues. "There are so few people of color in positions that people would want to have that there's not much to be jealous about," says Debra Adams, a black reporter. That hasn't always been the case. Until last year the paper had a city editor who was black. Several journalists of color at the *Courant* pointed to her departure as a source of concern.

"The perception was that they basically watered down her position and responsibility and she was set up to fail," says one black reporter, who requested anonymity. "It seems that she was always hamstrung or shackled." This view is shared by several nonwhite staff members; *Courant* executives say the woman simply left to take a better position.

One obstacle posed by the *Courant's* practice of hiring into its bureaus is that this makes it difficult for journalists to break into the city room. Terri Burke, assistant managing editor and the person who has done most of the recent hiring at the paper, says that a couple of years ago she decided the paper's lone Hispanic city-side reporter did not constitute diversity. She set out to bring another nonwhite journalist into a visible city-side beat, eventually hiring a young black woman who, Burke says, was talented, but "really didn't have enough experience [for this particular beat]. We had to admit we made a mistake." After ten months the reporter — who declined to comment — was reassigned. Burke notes that for many months city hall coverage did not substantially improve after the change, which put a white reporter on the beat.

Regarding her future hiring plans, Burke says, "My inclination is to keep on hiring minorities for the kinds of jobs I've been hiring them for" — i.e., entry-level bureau jobs.

On the other side of the country,

William A. Hilliard recalls that when he first came to work at *The Oregonian* as a copy boy in 1952, "there were no other people of color working in the building." Now Hilliard, a black, is editor of the paper, and he has worked to ensure that he is no longer alone in a sea of white faces. In the eyes of some, there is plenty of work yet to be done.

"The *Oregonian* newsroom is several years behind others in the business in addressing this issue," asserts George Rede, an assistant city editor, who is

Hispanic. "The change is occurring too slowly."

Hilliard and others say that a couple of factors work against them in their efforts to diversify — the paper's exceptionally low turnover (only one or two openings a year), and the fact that Portland, like the state as a whole, is overwhelmingly white and has a history of racial antagonism. Meanwhile, those steps that have been taken toward diversifying the *Oregonian* newsroom have not sat well with everyone and a certain

## THE REPORTER, THE EDITOR, AND THE RACIAL SLUR

Last July, *The Sunday Oregonian* ran an unusual article on the front page of its Forum section. In A RACIST INCIDENT, reporter Denise McVea described a personal encounter with racism in Portland. McVea described a visit with two white colleagues to a downtown cafeteria-style restaurant. As they stood near the cash register to pick up the lunches they had ordered in advance, a white-haired man in a blue business suit approached McVea, who is black. She described the encounter:

"Glaring at me, he muttered strongly, 'It's just like you people to cut in front of everybody.' His face was contorted in a contemptuous snarl." The confrontation continued until McVea hurled an expletive. According to her story, the man responded, "It's just like you people. I wouldn't expect anything else than that." While the man never used specific racial epithets, his message was loud and clear as the encounter escalated and all heads in the restaurant turned.

Returning to the newsroom, McVea, though shaken, decided she wanted to write about the encounter. She also wanted to find out who the man was. After a little digging, she learned that

his name was Bill White and that he was a vice-president in the Portland office of Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner and Smith. He was active in community and political affairs and had even hosted then Vice-President Bush at his summer home outside of Portland during a 1987 campaign stop. None of this, however, appeared in *The Oregonian*.

Between the time of the incident and publication of the story, McVea says, editors and an attorney at the paper "made me jump through hoops." She said these hoops included asking her to ensure that Bill White receive a copy of her story before it appeared, even after he had refused comment over the telephone. She also says that editors assured her that White would be identifiable in the story or would be named. When the story appeared, however, all specific information about White had been removed.

"The bottom line is that blacks in this country have not been treated fairly and newspapers don't know how to address that," McVea says.

There is some irony in the fact that the decision not to use White's name or any specific descriptive information came from William Hilliard, *The*

endemic level of discomfort was evident.

"We're so afraid of offending each other that we walk around on egg shells," says Gary Stein, an assistant news editor, who is white. "You don't act spontaneously." Sportswriter Wade Nkrumah says he feels "an undercurrent of resentment here regarding our program to bring in more minorities." He adds that he has often overheard white colleagues say unflattering things about nonwhites and their work habits.

*Oregonian's* editor, who is black.

Hilliard, who says he and his family have been the subject of racial harassment in Portland, says he worried that if White had been named and identified, readers could too easily dismiss the incident as the result of one man's bigotry. "He represents thousands in this community who are likely to do that if they have an opportunity," Hilliard says.

In fact, Hilliard adds, "I was somewhat stunned by the reaction of our white editors," who appeared shocked that this incident could have occurred. They seemed "to think that we were living in a community where this did not go on." Virtually all of those editors, by the way, urged Hilliard to publish the man's name.

A few days after McVea's article appeared in *The Oregonian*, an article appeared in *Willamette Week*, a Portland-area weekly, that named White and provided details on his background. In September, he left Merrill Lynch. Hilliard says there was no discussion about writing a story about this development: "As far as I was concerned, we had done what we wanted to do."

S.S.

If there is a lightning rod for diversity issues at *The Oregonian* it is David Austin, a young black journalist who has made it clear that he wants to move into a management position. "The only way to break some of these cycles is to get into a decision-making position," Austin says. "I've always been loud and vocal about what I want to see done at the paper."

Austin is currently going through a training program designed to introduce him to various jobs at the paper and prepare him for a management role. It's the first time *The Oregonian* has taken such a step for anyone and, according to reporter Michael Rollins, it has "created a lot of resentment among nonwhite and white reporters. He has become management's pet black."

Austin's response to such criticism is plainspoken: "The opportunities I've gotten I've gotten because I've been a pain in the ass." He goes on to say, "The only way people are going to understand the need for diversity in the newsroom is if it's force-fed to them — if they have to deal with it."

Ellen Heltzel, editor of *The Oregonian's* living section, says she understands the need to diversify her staff of eleven white writers and editors. But this is not an easy task to accomplish, given that there have been no openings in the section in more than two years. "If I want to get a minority in here it would mean plucking somebody out of their existing job," Heltzel says. She subsequently posed a question that often arises in the diversity debate: "What is the priority — to get the best reporter or to increase diversity?"

Editors at *The Cincinnati Enquirer* probably thought they were doing both when they hired Rob Parker away from the *New York Daily News* last year. Parker had been covering pro basketball at the *News*, but wanted to cover baseball. The *Enquirer* asked him to cover the Reds and Parker jumped at the

chance. Shortly after arriving at the *Enquirer*, Parker's salary, although not his name, was posted along with others on the Newspaper Guild's bulletin board in the newsroom. Everyone knew that the salary was Parker's; the item of interest, and controversy, was that he was making more than any other reporter at the *Enquirer*.

Mark Braykovich, a business writer who was head of the paper's guild unit at the time, says that "half a dozen to a dozen people" approached him about Parker's salary. Braykovich, who is white, says he found this interesting because, just a few months before, the *Enquirer* had hired away a top football writer from its competitor, also at a salary higher than any other reporters, but in that case the new man was white and "I hardly heard anything."

"I saw it as a race issue, personally," says Braykovich, who recalls that the gist of most comments made to him was, "How could you pay that much to somebody who's black?"

(Pay raises and race were at the center of an emotional incident at *The Boston Globe* this past November. Only days before staff members and management were scheduled to discuss how to deal with problems arising from the papers's commitment to diversity, a white reporter leaked information to a columnist at the rival *Herald* about pay raises given to two black reporters. Because most *Globe* reporters had received no raise during the past two years, as the result of a contract dispute, the leak caused a furor. Management had made the raises following attempts by other papers to hire the two black reporters.)

Another sore point is the perception that there are established minority slots. Several people at the *Enquirer* say the paper has a tendency to create such positions. Parker, for example, replaced another black sportswriter who moved to *The New York Times*.

*"We're so afraid of  
offending each other  
we walk around on  
egg shells"*

Reon Carter, a feature writer who is black and who replaced a black feature writer, says this tendency can be seen throughout the paper, particularly in management. "Certain positions have become the minority management position," she says. This is especially true of the editor of the paper's Extra section, a twice-weekly report on community news, which just named its third consecutive black editor. "It's not the gravy job," Carter says. "It's almost like being thrown a bone."

Mark Siebert, a metro reporter who is white, says a problem can arise when people in the *Enquirer* newsroom perceive such decisions as based largely on color. "I think it hurts a black reporter when you start using words like 'minority hire' in the newsroom," he says. "The danger is you sort of label someone as not qualified."

And if that journalist is not seen as qualified by his or her colleagues, observes reporter Ann Haas, who is white, "It becomes a division — kind of an us-against-them thing."

Such tensions must be addressed to prevent the newsroom from becoming a journalistic house divided against itself. An atmosphere must be created in which journalists of all colors can feel comfortable confronting these issues, and each other, in a constructive way. This appears to be an area where newspapers need to be jolted into action.

"I've never really felt there's a clear plan for what they are going to do" to create a more diverse newsroom environment, comments Sherman Williams, photo assignment editor at the *Courant*, who is black.

"There has not been a clear, strong, emphatic message from the top that this is the way things are going to be," says George Rede of *The Oregonian*.

"No one talks about that sort of thing here," says Scipio Thomas of the *Enquirer*. ♦

## TRACKING PROGRESS TOWARD AN ELUSIVE GOAL

BY DICK HAWS

*The Washington Post* did as it was asked both times, the *Chicago Sun-Times* didn't either time, and the *New York Post* did a first time, but not a second. At issue is public disclosure of minority hiring levels in newspaper newsrooms. While many newspapers permitted the American Society of Newspaper Editors to disclose their hiring levels each of the last two years, others did not.

For the last decade, the ASNE has been pressing its member-editors to increase their hiring of minorities. It has organized job fairs for minorities, created a jobs program, provided mini-sabbaticals for minority journalism professors, arranged internships for minorities, and funded minority scholarships.

But all of this has not been enough. Since 1978, when the ASNE began tracking hiring levels, through 1990, minority-group representation in the newsroom has increased at the rate of only three-tenths of a percentage point per year — from 3.95 percent in 1978 to 7.86 percent in 1990.

Public disclosure is the ASNE's latest prod — and it may prove to be the most effective. In 1991, member-editors reported the largest jump in minority hiring since 1978 — to 8.72, an increase almost three times greater than the average. Moreover, the increase came at a time of economic distress for newspapers: total newsroom employment dropped by 1,200 — from 56,900 in 1990 to 55,700 in 1991.

Public disclosure also seems to be growing in acceptance by newspapers. In 1990, only 46 percent, or 478 newspapers, allowed release; in 1991, 65 percent, or 657 newspapers, went public.

And the largest newspapers seem to be even more comfortable with disclosure. In 1990, thirty-three of the fifty largest newspapers went public, reporting hiring levels ranging from a high of 18.5 percent at *USA Today* to a low of 3.7 percent at *The Pittsburgh Press*. Last year, forty-one of the fifty largest

disclosed, reporting hiring levels ranging from a high of 31.2 percent at *The Miami Herald* to a low of 4.1 percent at *The Buffalo News*. The nine that failed to disclose were the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the *New York Post*, the *Newark Star-Ledger*, *The Boston Herald*, *The Arizona Republic*, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, *The San Diego Union*, *The Denver Post*, and *The Hartford Courant*.

One reason some newspapers may be choosing to withhold is that they have more to hide. The ASNE reported that, as a group, those papers that didn't disclose had significantly fewer minority employees (an average of 6.0 percent) than those that did (an average of 9.7 percent).

But the good news about the increase in minority hiring shouldn't obscure the overall newsroom picture, which remains bleak. More than half — 51 percent — of daily newspapers reported in 1991 they did not employ a single minority in their newsrooms. While most of those are tiny newspapers, some are not that small, like the *Charleston, West Virginia, Gazette* (circulation: 55,673); the *Sioux City, Iowa, Journal* (50,495); the *Decatur, Illinois, Herald and Review* (43,043); and the *Santa Monica, California Outlook* (27,332).

And minority-group supervisors remained rare. In 1991, of the 13,513 newsroom professionals, only 779, or 5.8 percent were minorities.

Back in 1978, the ASNE determined that, by the turn of the century, the percentage of minorities in newsrooms should be roughly equivalent to the percentage of minorities in society. It is estimated that by the year 2000 minorities will constitute more than one-quarter of the U.S. population; the way things look now, by the year 2000 the nation's newsrooms will probably have come little more than halfway to that goal.

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# The Clarence Thomas Hearings



John Ficara/Woodfin Camp



Larry Downing/Woodfin Camp

*Why everyone —  
left, right, and center — found the press  
guilty as charged*

by William Boot

It is an old newsroom axiom that if reporting on a particular event draws protests from both right and left, the journalists on the story have probably done a balanced job. But what if the coverage prompts rebukes not only from the left and right, but from the center as well? What if it arouses the ire of countless generally apolitical people, black and white, female and male? What if it even provokes certain news organizations to attack each other's coverage? If all those factors apply, we can only be talking about the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill sexual harassment dispute, which polarized the country and made for the most bizarre national news story to come our way in years.

Now that Thomas has been confirmed to the Supreme Court, it is time to take stock of the various objections to news coverage that this controversy provoked. First, an assessment of complaints from the right. Many conservatives were con-

vinced that reporters were out to block Thomas by exploiting a news leak. Closely held Senate Judiciary Committee information had been disclosed to *Newsday's* Timothy Phelps and NPR's Nina Totenberg. Their stories about Hill's allegations jolted the country on Sunday, October 6. Coming just two days before the Senate was scheduled to vote on Thomas, the leaks seemed to many to be politically motivated, timed to derail his nomination. The leaks prompted the Senate to delay Thomas's confirmation vote for one week, so the committee — under attack for not having taken Hill's allegation seriously — could probe the charges. For the first time Thomas's nomination seemed to be in real jeopardy.

Conservatives began denouncing the leaks with fierce indignation, demanding a formal investigation (now in progress) and offering to pay a bounty of more than \$30,000 to anyone who could identify the leaker. This reaction was, of course, part of a long tradition of selective outrage over leaks (a leak is monstrous if it hurts politically but not nearly so heinous if it helps, and Republicans themselves leak like crazy when it suits them). But what was the substance of their case against this

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*William Boot is the pen name of Christopher Hanson, Washington correspondent for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. Research assistance was provided by David Rynecki, a CJR intern, and The Media Research Center lent videotapes of television coverage.*

*Brent Baker argues that Phelps and Totenberg reported their leaks before they had done enough reporting to justify their stories*



particular leak? For one thing, they argued that reporting it was unethical, because it would damage Hill, who wanted to keep her allegations confidential. "This is going to be one of the saddest chapters in American journalism," Senator Alan Simpson predicted during an October 7 ABC *Nightline* confrontation with Totenberg. Casting himself as a protector of women, he said that disclosing Hill's name was like disclosing the name of a rape victim: "You've blown the cover of a person on a sexual harassment charge ... you will have destroyed this woman." Of course, it was Simpson and his allies who immediately set about trying to destroy her. Judiciary Committee Republicans accused her of concocting her story and of committing perjury and eventually branded her mentally unstable.

There is no question that journalists trespassed on Hill's privacy in exploiting the leak. Senate staffers had approached her, having heard that she had been harassed, and Hill had provided details on condition that they not be made public. But then someone leaked her affidavit to reporters, who leaped on the story. Thus, against her will, Hill was placed in the spotlight. On balance, this intrusion seems justified, considering that most of the senators preparing to vote on Thomas were not even aware of the allegations against him, and should have been. (Judiciary Committee members say they kept their knowledge of Hill's allegations under wraps to protect the privacy of the nominee and his accuser.)

Thomas's defenders also suggested that reporters who exploited the leak were, in effect, assassinating the federal judge's character on behalf of the Democrats. This argument confuses two issues — the motivation for the leak and the question of whether the allegations were true. The leakers may well have been Democrats out to get Thomas because he is a conservative (I'd be surprised to learn they were anything else). Even so, it is still possible that Thomas was guilty of sexual harassment. This surely was a serious matter that had to be explored by the media. Since the Judiciary Committee had opted not to explore it, reporting the leak was necessary to force the Senate into action. Reporters' responsibility is to try to get to the bottom of things, not cover them up, even if some news subjects suffer as a result. (It does seem that the possible motivations of leakers should be addressed in a story like this. What both the Phelps and Totenberg pieces lacked was a section that, without giving away the leakers' identities, could have suggested what might have

prompted this disclosure at the time it occurred — i.e., only after Thomas's foes had exhausted their other anti-Thomas ammunition.)

Another, more considered, objection to the leak reporting comes from Brent Baker of the conservative Media Research Center. Baker argues that Phelps and Totenberg reported their leaks too hastily, recklessly jeopardizing Thomas's reputation before they had done enough reporting to justify their stories. He noted in an interview that Hill's allegation was far different from a claim that nominee X was guilty of something that definitely could be proven, such as stock fraud. Hill's allegation was an instance of her-word-against-his (as is generally the case in sexual harassment cases); there were no witnesses and real corroboration was impossible. Baker contends that, given those limitations and the inevitable damage to Thomas's reputation that disclosure would cause, Phelps and Totenberg should have held their stories until they had established, among other things, that there had been some *pattern* of misbehavior, with other women claiming he had been guilty of sexual misconduct with them. (*Charlotte Observer* editor Angela Wright eventually contacted the Judiciary Committee to allege that Thomas had put sexual pressure on her when she worked for him at the EEOC.)

Baker makes a strong case, but he does not give sufficient weight to the high-pressure situation in which Phelps and Totenberg found themselves. The Senate vote was just a couple of days away that Sunday, and if the story had not gotten out immediately there might never have been a Senate investigation. Given the time constraints, the two reports were not irresponsible. They cited "corroboration" from a friend of Hill's, who said Hill had complained of being sexually harassed at the time of the alleged conduct in the early '80s. The Totenberg piece carried Thomas's denial of the allegations. Phelps, unfortunately, could not reach him for comment, but he did include quotes from employee Phyllis Berry-Myers, who had worked for Thomas and who said it was inconceivable that he could be guilty of harassment.

Leaks aside, conservative groups like Baker's complain of a pervasive liberal bias in coverage. Even the *Wall Street Journal* editorial board got into the act, accusing *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* of taking a "politically correct" pro-Hill approach to the issue (October 17 lead editorial). Conservative critics are able to cite some specific instances of slanted reporting (see below), but overall it does not appear that liberal



bias was much of a factor during the Hill-Thomas hearings. On the contrary: a report by the Center for Media and Public Affairs in Washington concluded that Thomas got much better press than Hill during the hearings. This study of some 220 network news broadcasts and newspaper articles found that, after the hearings began, nearly four out of five individuals quoted in news accounts backed Thomas. (Just prior to the hearings, a majority had been critical of him.) As to Hill, "more than three out of four [sources] expressed doubt or outright hostility towards her allegations." These data hardly suggest pervasive liberal bias. Instead, they suggest that pro-Thomas forces dominated the debate during the hearings on Hill's allegations of sexual harassment and that the media rather passively reflected this, just as they reflected the domination of pro-Hill advocates in the days prior to those hearings.

As to specifics of bias, consider these excerpts from the October 21 edition of *Time*, cited in the conservative newsletter *Media Watch*. *Time* associate editor Jill Smolowe wrote: "Given the detail and consistency of her testimony, it was almost inconceivable that Hill, rather than describing her own experiences, was fabricating the portrait of a sexual-harassment victim...." In fact, it is not "almost inconceivable" that she was fabricating — the polls indicated that millions of Americans found the idea quite conceivable. In the same edition, senior editor Nancy Gibbs declared:

Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth were slaves by birth, freedom fighters by temperament. Rosa Parks was a tired seamstress who shoved history forward by refusing to give up her seat on the bus.... The latest to claim her place in line is Anita Hill, a private, professional woman unwilling to relinquish her dignity without a fight.

In fact, Hill is another Rosa Parks only if one assumes she is telling the truth.

Elsewhere, of course, one could find pro-Thomas biases. *The New Republic's* Fred Barnes asserted without evidence on the October 12 *McLaughlin Group* broadcast that Hill was spinning "a monstrous lie," and Morton Kondracke, also of *TNR*, bolstered the theory, saying Hill might be compared to Tawana Brawley. John McLaughlin (himself no stranger to sex harassment allegations) compared Hill to Janet Cooke.

For some less ideologically driven critics, a major complaint centered on sensationalism of this story. Political scientist Norman Ornstein, a barometer of centrist conventional wisdom, said in an interview that television coverage revealed

warped news priorities at NBC, CBS, and ABC. They ran hours of Hill-Thomas testimony, whereas they had not provided live coverage of his pre-Hill confirmation hearings, at which big issues like abortion were on the table. This showed that ratings drove their news decisions and that personal scandal wins out every time over drier but equally important issues.

This is true, up to a point. Commercial networks do pander shamelessly. But as Ornstein acknowledged in a second interview, Hill-Thomas was, by almost any measure, a bigger story and deserved more coverage than the first round of Thomas hearings (where the nominee spent hours ducking the abortion issue and revealing as little about himself as possible). Once Hill's allegations became public, much more drama was to be had: there was a substantive issue (sexual harassment), and there were multiple conflicts (one man vs. one woman, men vs. women, black men vs. black women, women vs. Congress, Congress vs. the White House). And, of course, there was sex. Judiciary Committee chairman Joseph Biden described the high megatonnage of the story: "I know of no system of government where, when you add the kerosene of sex, the heated flame of race, and the incendiary nature of television lights, you are not going to have an explosion" (quoted on an *ABC Town Meeting*, October 16).

Other objectors offered a kind of prude's critique, complaining that it was a travesty to bring all that graphic talk about Thomas's alleged references to sex with animals, and porn star Long Dong Silver, and pubic hairs on Coke cans into our living rooms, where children and old ladies could be watching. According to an ABC News poll released after the hearings, news media were rated lower for their Hill-Thomas performance than were the Democrats, the Republicans, Congress, or George Bush. One has to assume that the low rating was due in part to the graphic subject matter.

Of course, even those who voiced disgust kept watching. They could not do without the details. The story could not be told adequately without them. In fact, some TV journalists issued warnings to parents that simultaneously served as advertisements for the juicy material to come. Dan Rather, at the start of the Saturday October 12 hearings, said earnestly: "Now we want to *strongly* caution parents ... there may once again be *extremely graphic testimony* that you may not want your children to watch. You may want to think about that." A few moments later, corre-

*Some TV journalists issued warnings to parents that, at the same time, served as ads for the juicy material to come*



spondent Bob Schieffer voiced awe at a case so unprecedented that it had forced the anchor of CBS News to say such a thing:

SCHIEFFER (intense, portentous delivery): Let me just go back to the words you used at the start of this broadcast. We want to warn parents that what they may hear might be offensive to their children. Have you ever begun a broadcast of a Senate hearing with those kind of words?

RATHER: Never

SCHIEFFER: It seems to me that that illustrates and underlines just how very different this is...

Come now, wasn't this laying it on a bit thick?

Enough of the prudes — on to the feminists, who had quite different objections. One was that the news media, especially TV, were manipulated by the Republicans and used as tools to demolish Hill. Judith Lichtman of the Women's Legal Defense Fund argues, for example, that, during the hearings, journalists failed to draw the attention of viewers to Republican strategies and to the fumbling of committee Democrats. She contends that the networks and newspapers should have brought in experts to challenge questionable claims like the allegation that Hill had committed perjury, the insinuation that Hill might be "delusional," and Thomas's striking claim that he was the victim of "a high-tech lynching for uppity blacks." Instead, Lichtman says, most reporters were mere conduits: "The media portrayed what was presented to them — they therefore were manipulated.... We were let down by the media."

Lichtman is correct that reporters had seemingly little impact on public perceptions during the hearings. She is a bit off the mark as to why. Networks and newspapers actually did make some effort to provide the sort of commentary she says was lacking (as well as counter-opinion from conservatives). But, for reasons we'll get to shortly, this news analysis does not appear to have mattered much.

Here are some examples of the critical commentary. NBC's Robert Bazell, on the October 13 *Nightly News*, interviewed New York psychiatrist Robert Spitzer, who voiced extreme skepticism about the assertion that Hill was living in a fantasy world. Black commentator Bob Herbert on NBC's *Sunday Today* (October 13) sharply questioned Thomas's claim to be a victim of racism. In a series of live network interviews, sexual harassment experts like University of Michigan law pro-

fessor Catharine MacKinnon disputed a Republican claim that no genuine harassment victim would have followed Thomas to a new job, as Hill did in 1983. (Hill went with Thomas from the Department of Education to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.) Reporters also tried to give audiences an idea of Republican strategy and Democratic timidity. "One had the impression that ... Orrin Hatch sort of played the part of Mike Tyson," Dan Rather told CBS viewers October 11. "Before Senator Biden could sort of get off his stool, Hatch was at him, all over him, and decked him." ABC's Tim O'Brien (*World News Sunday*, October 13) reported that Biden had acquiesced to Republicans, giving Thomas the big p.r. boost of live prime-time exposure.

As the opinion polls suggest, however, the impact of all this critical reporting was marginal. Why? The main reason, I suspect, is that this was a riveting live television event. Millions were watching and drawing their own conclusions. They did not need reporters to provide a news filter, so viewers may have listened even less closely than usual to commentary and analysis.

Live TV was only part of the press's "control" problem. In some cases, we lost control over some of our own debilitating impulses, which helped to undermine whatever small influence critical commentary might otherwise have had. For instance, there was the "Babble Factor": much of the intelligent news analysis (liberal, moderate, and conservative) was simply drowned out by the compulsive babbling and hyperbole that this event seemed to arouse in journalists. On October 11, Peter Jennings said of the Judiciary Committee, which has its share of dim bulbs: "One of the things we of course might remind people as they watch these proceedings ... is that these senators are all profoundly intelligent men on this committee. In many cases they're all lawyers." Over on CBS, Dan Rather was groping for simple solutions. "If the FBI can't determine who's lying between the two, let's have some homicide detective out from Phoenix or New York City to spend a few days on this," he blurted on October 12. NBC's Brokaw said on October 11 that it would be bad if the hearings were to last several days because "it's in the national interest to have this all done as quickly and efficiently and completely as possible." As if doing it quickly were compatible with doing it efficiently and completely! (In order to meet the tight Senate-imposed timetable, the committee decided not to call any expert witnesses at all — making a thorough investigation

*Much of the intelligent news analysis was drowned out by the compulsive babbling this event seemed to arouse in journalists*





virtually impossible.)

Then, for a few minutes on October 15, just before the Senate vote on Thomas, NBC seemed to lose complete control of its critical faculties. The network jumped from Capitol Hill coverage to Pinpoint, Georgia, where Thomas's mother could be seen live, rocking back and forth and praying in a neighbor's kitchen ("They're trying to keep him from helping us, Lord, but I ask you, Jesus, to please give it to him!" etc.) The sequence was captioned "NBC News Exclusive." The network seemed to be boasting, but why was difficult to fathom.

Another way in which journalists got sidetracked might be called the "Perry Mason Factor." Refusing to heed warnings from calmer heads, like ABC correspondent Hal Bruno, an astonishing number of journalists accepted a Republican comparison between the hearings and a trial. Republicans (and some Democrats, including the feckless Biden, at times) advanced the trial metaphor, emphasizing that Thomas must be judged by the standard of innocent until proven guilty, even though other nominees have been rejected on grounds of reasonable doubt and no candidate has a *right* to a seat on the Supreme Court. Reporters took the bait and reinforced a presumption-of-innocence message. "A political trial [is] effectively what we have going on here today. ... There is a kind of trial aspect to all of this after all," said Brokaw during coverage of the October 11 hearings. "We have four institutions and people on trial ... in a nonlegal proceeding," said Bryant Gumbel on the same broadcast. "I guess in a sense it is a trial in a way [and] we're seeing the defense lay out its strategy here," said Bob Schieffer over on CBS on October 12; "It is a trial in a way," agreed his boss, Dan Rather. And so on. By the eve of the confirmation vote, over half the public agreed that Thomas should get the benefit of the doubt, according to a CBS-*New York Times* poll. Senate Republican leader Bob Dole said polls like that were what assured Thomas's confirmation.

Finally, there was the "Shovel Factor." Reporters (including me) failed to dig hard enough on their own during the Senate's consideration of Thomas. Why weren't the sexual harassment allegations against Thomas disclosed earlier? After all, Phelps of *Newsday* says reporters were hearing about the allegations as long ago as last July. Why wasn't more done to investigate Thomas's alleged taste for pornography, an allegation that became very pertinent in sizing up Hill's veracity? Why

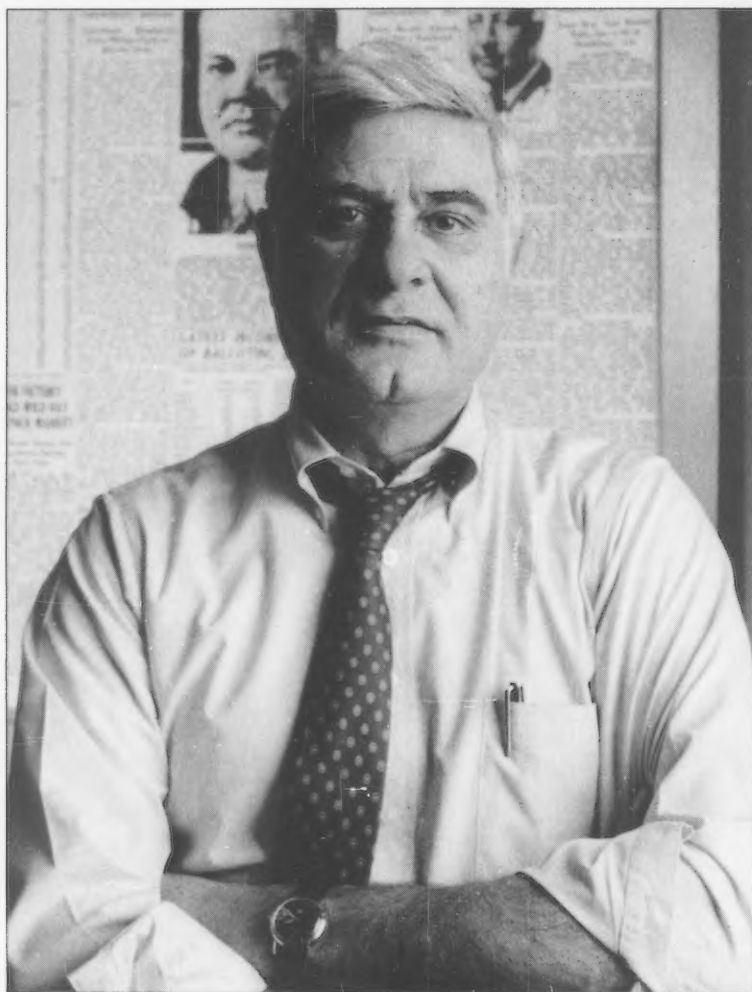
didn't reporters explain why Angela Wright, who complained that Thomas had sexually pressured her, was never called as a witness?

Before Hill's accusations became public, why wasn't more done to explore allegations that Thomas had breached conflict of interest standards? In one case, he ruled in favor of Ralston Purina, rather than recusing himself, even though his mentor and patron, Senator John Danforth, had a big interest in the company. In another case, Thomas was accused of delaying release of one of his controversial appeals court decisions, possibly to bolster his confirmation prospects. (Thomas denies any delay.) I was able to find fewer than ten stories devoted to the Ralston Purina issue and only a few focusing on the delayed ruling controversy. Meanwhile, as the left-leaning Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting group points out, news organizations ran dozens of articles about Thomas's climb from rags to riches — the Horatio Alger theme that the administration played up to divert attention from the nominee's meager judicial experience. Reporters had, once again, bought the Republican sales pitch.

Pro-Thomas salesmen continued to pitch successfully even after the nominee was confirmed, with Justice Thomas actively participating (which is highly unusual conduct in that Supreme Court members have traditionally been media-shy). Thomas cooperated in the ultimate puff piece, a seven-page, November 11 *People* magazine cover article, "How We Survived," told in the first person by his wife, Virginia. In it, she asserts that Hill "was probably in love with my husband" and that her charges "were politically motivated." She makes a point of describing the importance of home prayer sessions to the family. In a photograph illustrating the article, the two pose on a sofa, reading a Bible together.

Why are the Thomases continuing a p.r. offensive? Perhaps as a kind of preemptive strike. As Phelps pointed out in a recent panel discussion, reporters are still on the case, investigating whether there is solid evidence to back up allegations that Thomas committed perjury during the hearings. "We hear that people are still digging, trying to impugn his integrity," Virginia Thomas said in *People*. "But it's over." That may be so. But if new derogatory stories about the judge are broken in the months ahead, I would not be too surprised if we hear even more about the Thomas family's devotional habits — stopping short, one can only hope, of another urgent TV prayer bulletin from Pinpoint, Georgia. ♦

*An astonishing number of journalists accepted a Republican comparison between the hearings and a trial*



Rob Nelson



# Southern Journalism: Gone With The Wind?

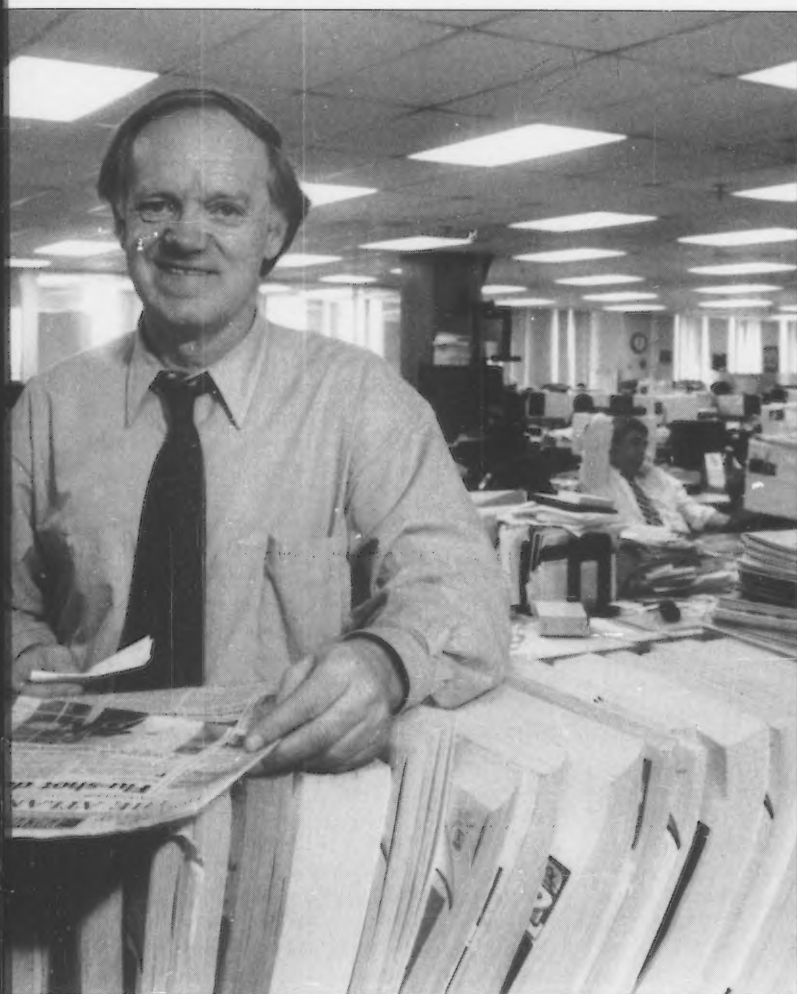
*Seems like nobody's left  
to name names and kick ass*

by Gary Moore

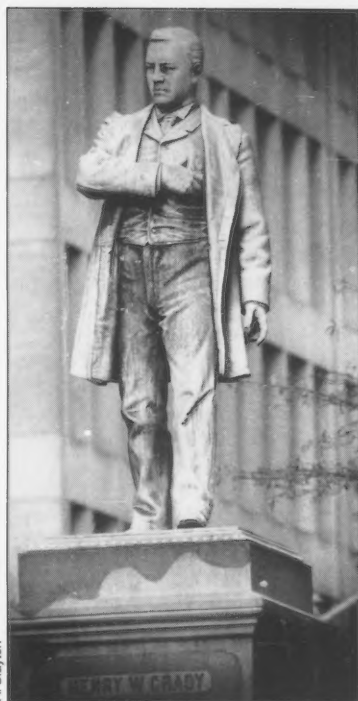
An Appomattox of sorts came to the South at the tag end of the Sunbelt decade as across the region hopes raised in the 1980s for a deeper kind of southern news met defeat.

On a November night in 1988, for example, three southern commandos of information — Bill Kovach, Pat Conroy, and Hodding Carter III — gathered in a living room in Atlanta. Kovach, editor of *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, had left *The New York Times* two years earlier to seize "the great chance to produce a great newspaper in the South," according to Dudley Clendinen, who had also come south

*Gary Moore is a free-lance writer who has worked at The Miami Herald, the St. Petersburg Times, and The Atlanta Journal and Constitution.*



Al Clayton



Al Clayton

**Henry Grady (above) edited *The Atlanta Constitution* after the Civil War and used it to promote the idea of the New South. Bill Kovach (far left) sought to make it "a great newspaper in the South," and lasted two years. His successor, Ron Martin (center) brought out *USA Today*.**

toward home with Kovach as part of what some folks in the Atlanta newsroom called The New York Times Mafia.

"This was going to be the good fight," recalls Carter, who saw Kovach's battle as being one against "those characterless, bloodless, engulfing corporations. And here's a place where we're going to make journalism be journalism. And we're going to stand them off."

Rebel yell redivivus! That wild neverland, the South, was to be the last redoubt against corporate-speak. But from the start, as things now seem, the cause was lost.

Kovach told his friends that night how top management at the paper had outflanked his reforms, pushing for a more "*USA Today* approach." A week

earlier he had resigned. His replacement was Ron Martin of Gannett, who had brought out *USA Today*. A milestone in the journalism of the South had passed by.

Of course, whether there was ever such an animal as southern journalism is a matter (somewhat like the existence of the tar baby or Mike Fink) to be resolved by the soul. However, at least since William Faulkner's great-granddaddy, the Ole Colonel, saved *The Ripley Advertiser* of Mississippi and killed two men in separate duels, then fell dead to a third, southern news has had a mystique of its own. The "crusading country editor" syndrome has embraced such types as William Brann of Waco, Texas, who in 1898 was plugged fatally where his galluses

crossed his back; and there were the "New South" civilizers of the 1880s, such as Henry Grady of *The Atlanta Constitution*; and, too, there was E.O. Susong, who in 1916 fired up the Smoky Mountains, moving a competitor to sneer, "A woman had become proprietor of the *Greeneville Democrat*. This newspaper will not be alive when the roses bloom" — though soon Edith O. Susong had bought out that same competitor along with others, explaining, "They were drunk and I was sober."

The story of the South's quest to know (or not know) itself, through its journalism, could make a monumental narrative, particularly timely now when a lot of people are saying that whatever it was that may or may not have been special — or horrible — about the South, and about its journalism, is gone

with the wind. Begun among the chains of slavery, the rambunctiousness of southern journalism may now be dissipating like exhausted swamp gas among the info boxes and migratory managers of the newspaper chains.

*The Daily Hot Blast* of Anniston, Alabama, started rolling its presses in a prefabricated, pre-platted "New South" factory town in 1883. Henry Grady himself, the man whose statue now reposes under the pigeons of Marietta Street below the Atlanta Journal and Constitution tower, rode over from Georgia and bestowed the *Hot Blast's* name. The new town of Anniston — and its paper — were building blocks in Grady's regional dream.

"The idea of the New South, born after the Confederate defeat, was rhetorically transformed by journalists into a palpable reality during the 1880s," observes *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. The battle plan was to dump the lost cause and get down to the real business of reeling in Yankee factories. Journalists led the charge.

Journalists — but not muckrakers. Grady spoke to "a demand in the South for publicists who could transform the region's promise into actual achievement ... fabricating myths of southern success," according to E. Culpepper Clark of the University of Alabama.

"In general, during the long decades following the Civil War and even up to the halfway mark of this century, southern newspapers comforted rather than challenged their readers," wrote Mitchell Shields of *Southern Magazine* in 1989. An eerie comment — because *Southern* itself, born in 1986 and called the first great southern general-interest magazine since Edgar Allan Poe's *Messenger* in Virginia, was to die with the Sunbelt Decade, having failed to massage the regional ego.

"That really has been the job of journalism in the South, to make the community feel good about itself — because nobody else was," sighs Linton Weeks, now managing editor of *The Washington Post Magazine* and formerly editor of *Southern* in Arkansas. Literate, crisp, deeply affectionate toward the region, *Southern Magazine* wasted away, then was bought in 1989 and was discreetly killed by the owners

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## The rambunctiousness of southern journalism may now be dissipating like exhausted swamp gas among the info boxes and migratory managers of the newspaper chains

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of its larger rival — *Southern Living*, sometimes called the money-makingest magazine in America, now an asset of Time Warner. *Southern Living* was the easy victor, presenting "the up side of life in the South, the South where there are no problems, everyone is prosperous and dressed for the country club," in the view of journalism professor Sam Riley of Virginia Tech.

"The South's whole history was to be defensive, to sit pat," muses Dudley Clendinen, whose Old Tampa drawl was heard among the losing battles at *The Atlanta Constitution* in the late 1980s — battles that, in many ways, paralleled *Southern's*. Clendinen, who was assistant managing editor in charge of features at the retooled *Journal* and *Constitution*, says that the "great chance" to save the soul of southern information was undone by a national trend "toward comfort journalism." Instead of an aggressive southern newspaper of record there came the resignations of Bill Kovach and his New York Times Mafia. Then the *Journal* and *Constitution* got a very different look. The new editor, Ron Martin, a midwesterner, says straight out that he sees nothing particularly distinctive about the South or its journalistic tradition. To feelings among some Atlantans that the post-Kovach *Journal* and *Constitution* may look a bit peppy or smiley-faced, Martin replies, with the air of a man who's tired of hearing this, that graphics and color constitute a craft, that more raw data are packed into the paper than ever before — though "we deliver it in

different ways" — and that "I'm not saying every story has to be five paragraphs." Journalism, he says, must be rethought to be saved.

But now see here, sir. The South does breed myth, and hence story, and hence narrative.

"Southerners like a good story, and they like a good story well told, and they like to see it in the newspaper." Karen F. Brown of The Poynter Institute in Florida qualifies her statement to remind that southern narrative partakes of two streams: "Africans have such an oral tradition," as do the Celtic bards on courthouse squares.

"The ear for personal journalism, the ear for those good stories" appeals to Charles Overby, who in 1982 eased Gannett into ownership of Mississippi's mercurial *Clarion-Ledger* (Pulitzer Prize, 1983) and now-defunct *Jackson Daily News*. At the Atlanta bureau of *Time*, Don Winbush delights in southern spoken texture. He heard a yarn the other day that plays on the intonations of a single phrase: Umh-hm — which can mean I hear you, I'm really with you, or Isn't that a shame.

Molly Ivins of the now-defunct *Dallas Times Herald* loves southern tales as well, but sees a price: "This is an oral culture, which means" (she flips to Dimebox twang) "that payple hear down't reede and raght tew much."

The South's greatest *written* works were not midwifed from the rich *spoken* tradition until the Southern Renaissance of the 1920s. Lone scribes — intruders in the dust — began finding sanctuary in a mechanized century, recording a Boo Radley kingdom of illiteracy. But, alas, the same advances that opened up the mind of the South would ultimately work against narrative charm. Home air-conditioning breezed in after World War II and the technoculture sealed off porch-swing yarn-swapping with a trim little Tupperware burp, shrink-wrapped for the deep-freeze. And anyway, the prime of southern literature has been fiction, not journalism. Indirection, not fact. Guerrilla warfare of the heart.

The lone horrified commentator did become a journalistic staple — Ray Stannard Baker *Following the Color Line* on the heels of the Atlanta race riot of 1906 (a bloodbath encouraged by an upstart Hearst paper in town, *The*



Atlanta Evening News), or Walter White aghast at the human ashes of the Ocoee Massacre in 1920; or James Agee faint-praising famous men; or Zora Hurston's twisted brilliance — "Among the thousand white persons, I am a dark rock surged upon, and overswept" — dying alone and forgotten as a mumbling Miami maid. After the Tulsa race riot of 1921 was laid at the doorstep of "a sensation-seeking newspaper," all master copies of the front page and editorials of *The Tulsa Tribune* for May 31, 1921, disappeared before they could be microfilmed, leaving no record, according to historian Scott Ellsworth. It took the *New York World* to spotlight Roaring Twenties Klan atrocities (in Mer Rouge, Louisiana, two nice white folks were crushed alive beneath the cleats of a newfangled road-paving machine), and the *World* also slew Cracker Florida's convict-slavery system in 1923 — after another nice white boy succumbed while on a cool-hand road gang.

Long afterward — after William Hodding Carter, Jr., of *The Delta Democrat-Times* in Greenville, Mississippi, had "confronted the Thing, and the Thing had been for the moment beaten" (Pulitzer, 1946); and Ralph McGill had rumbled at left-front of *The Atlanta Constitution* that the South was a beloved "crippled child" (Pulitzer, 1959); and Hazel Brannon Smith's Lexington, Mississippi, *Advertiser* had been run clean out of advertising by the white Citizens' Council (Pulitzer, 1964); and WLBT of Jackson, Mississippi, had become the first broadcast medium in America to get its license pulled, basically, for racist barbarism (FCC, 1969) — after all this had come and gone, and had even waxed a bit quaint, like Chill Tonic plaques on bygone pines, then it began to be said by some that maybe all along journalistic quality in the South had been something of a one-trick pony. Without lynch mobs, the Thing lacked hoof and horn. What did you crusade against now — the heat?

Asked to name some crusading southern editors in the present day, Claude Sitton, admired as being independent as a hog on ice at *The News and Observer* of Raleigh (Pulitzer, 1983), as well as at *The New York*

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*Times*, replies, "Umh-umm." He politely pauses twelve seconds. "... I'd have to think...."

In the 1980s, the Sunbelt rose with a Reagan buckle — robust, upbeat — at a time when downbeat things like post-Watergate investigative journalism were dimming in the screen-snow of a post-literacy age. Along with the Sunbelt, national illiteracy seemed to be rising, too — as if Dixie were suddenly bandwagon leader of Bakker Belt belief in the need not to know.

A great definer of the South has been its schooling. The Southern Newspaper Publishers Association says that nearly a third of southerners sixteen and over are high-school dropouts, while at least 6 million southerners read below a fourth-grade level. "That has a dampening effect on newspapers," observes Charles Overby.

Then, all too soon, the Sunbelt had set. By 1987, Sunbelt Savings in Dallas was being called Gunbelt Savings (quickdraw on the loans; maybe \$3 billion in casualties), and WFAA-TV's Byron Harris was building on earlier work by Alan Pusey and Christi Harlan of *The Dallas Morning News* to dig up S&L hell. Harris told his news director cheerlessly: "The good news is I have a spectacular story. The bad news is we're going to have a depression." Simultaneously, *The Charlotte Observer* was hastening the fall of fast-faith in South Carolina, as Jim-n-Tammy pulled at the pillars of televangelism. The South's shopping demons, as Tammy Faye might have put it, were

no longer hopping.

Quick as a tax-sheltered land-flip, the term "Sunbelt" has faded from American speech like "Tippecanoe" and "free silver." The South — like the nation — has felt the contraction.

Money has been another of the great definers of the South. One of the poorest counties in the nation, Sumter County, Alabama, contains what has been called the largest toxic waste dump in the world, the Chemwaste site at Emelle. The South is rated worst in the nation on environmental policy by the Institute of Southern Studies in North Carolina. Major southern issues often unfold outside metro news beats — and sometimes in silence. A few small-town publishers such as Brandt Ayers, grandson of the publisher of the Anniston *Daily Hot Blast*, have found they can assign investigative work, but most plead a lack of funds — or a surfeit of local friends.

Alex Jones, media reporter for *The New York Times* (and grandson of Edith O. Susong of the *Greenville Democrat*), says that small southern papers do have the capacity to dig — if they choose. "It's a matter of courage. It's usually not a matter of means."

One major excavator among southern journalists isn't in print. John Camp put a state insurance commissioner behind bars, skewered a key advertiser, taped international drug conspirators, and opened the files on the Reverend Jimmy Swaggart. Camp found "investigative reporter's heaven" at WBRZ-TV in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where news director John Spain and the owning Manship family remained committed despite more than \$250,000 in litigation costs, producing fifty-eight-minute *Close-Up Reports* in prime time. No commercial breaks. Camp sees few stations with that kind of commitment. When Cable News Network in Atlanta poured \$5 million into a special assignments staff of thirty, Camp became a CNN investigator — but not for investigating the South (see "Investigative Reporting: CNN Goes For the Gold," *CJR*, September/October 1990). An official of CNN has been heard to grumble that podunk Dixie spats are inappropriate for coverage when world hunger looms. Just when the South makes the big leagues, it gets outrun by globalism.

[INFO BOX! The USA Census calls the South the most populous USA region. 85 million southern people form one third of the USA — more than Northeast (51 million), Midwest (60 million), or West (53 million). 10 million new southerners have popped up since 1980. Yet only 28 percent of all USA dailies are southern, and 24 percent of the top-circulation USA papers.

**Top Five Sunday Circulation:**

<i>Atlanta Journal and Constitution</i>	681,100
<i>Houston Chronicle</i>	616,629
<i>Dallas Morning News</i>	558,855
<i>Miami Herald</i>	533,389
<i>St. Petersburg Times</i>	447,493

**Most Pulitzers:**

*Louisville Courier-Journal* 9

**More popular:** TV! 32 percent of all TV is viewed in SouthernUSA.

PINK SCREEN. END INFO BOX!]

"Maybe one of the biggest events of the '80s was the chaining, if you will, of the southern newspapers," says Charles Overby, who moved from Mississippi to Washington and became president of the Freedom Forum, formerly the Gannett Foundation. "Really, the southern newspapers were the last bastion of family journalism," he says. Even the old dragon-slaying daily once run by William Hodding Carter, Jr., has been sold at last to Freedom Newspapers. "That's the greatest irony," muses Overby, "the most liberal newspaper in Mississippi selling out to the most conservative chain in the country."

The Sunbelt salad days watched the Times Mirror people from L.A. and D.C. storm Dallas, goad Texas journalism toward excellence, then flee by the end of the decade, leaving as modernized victor a stolid old southern standard, *The Dallas Morning News*. In Mississippi, the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* was scorned in the '60s as a racist preserve of the Hederman family, then was cheered in the '70s as a feisty progressive voice under a new generation of Hedermans — but then by the '90s had been sold and had cooled a bit under chain ownership, with a local reputation for reduced investigation.

A blip in the chaining came last fall. "The oldest newspaper west of the Mississippi," the *Arkansas Gazette* of Little Rock, was bought away from Gannett by the other paper in town, the *Arkansas Democrat*, and the two papers were merged, ending a bloody Twelve Years War with an estimated

The essence of the South may be hard to write down, but it's still there — a place too long secret, a raintree, a foxfire, a lord-god bird — to be discovered, examined, recorded, made known

\$30 million in annual losses. This local setback for a chain was nonetheless a victory for standardization. Just to the south, in Louisiana, second papers also shut down in Shreveport and Baton Rouge.

In Florida, the big media kept slugging. Andrew Barnes of the *St. Petersburg Times* is sometimes mentioned as one of the few crusading southern editors left — though he comes from frozen climes and works in a city known for its northern retirees. *The Miami Herald* and WJXT in Jacksonville spark comments about heavy hitters as well. The Sunshine State may be the last refuge of the Sunbelt glow — like the storied Confederate Treasure Train of 1865, run to ground at last down on the Suwannee.

Presently in the South the '90s have progressed to find South Carolina public television leaving behind the 1975 FCC rebuke of Alabama Educational TV for racial discrimination by broadcasting the views of a black psychiatrist who explained that Caucasians began as orphan albinos driven out of Africa, as proved by Romulus and Remus ("They were raised by wolves. This says something"). And as colophon, Whittle Communications of Knoxville is bringing books-with-ads to America, while also piping Channel One commercials to captive minds in schoolrooms nationwide, describing this as a precious American freedom.

Time to bite the bullet, rumbles Claude Sitton, calling for a new kind of news — aimed at "a class audience as opposed to a mass audience," a hum-

bled goal of less than 50 percent penetration among the educated and the concerned. If the papers "turn themselves into nothing but TV guides, sooner or later they're going to go out of business." Sitton feels that in some cases the formula-loving chains have improved the media. But "chain newspapers are just not designed to take names and kick ass."

Ron Martin of *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution* takes issue, sir. Martin sees innovative compaction of data as a last great hope for newspapers in the age of TV-VDT. "It's very easy to say, I'm just not going to play anymore because it's just too complicated." Martin is "scared when I think about how this whole business is evolving into words on a computer screen. How in the hell are you ever going to stick it into people's faces and say, This is important?"

These days, Old Man Carter's boy, Hodding Carter III, has gone down to Maine to write a book about "My South, the Balkans." Sort of the Nine Nations of Confederamerica. Carter points out that in the 1988 presidential elections at least half the people who voted in the South were not born there. Many new arrivals aren't from the Rust Belt, but from Mexico.

The soul of southern journalism today may be said to be under contest by two main camps — those who see the South as basically no place special anymore, with southern journalism being like any shiny sprocket in chain news; and those who say, Well, yeah, okay — but the South still *breathes*. Its essence may be as hard to write down as a broad "I" or a narrowed eye, but it's there, despite the difficulty of digitizing it — a place too long secret — a raintree, a foxfire, a lord-god bird — to be discovered, examined, recorded, made known.

When Alex Jones's wife, who is from Maine, came back to New York from the South, she said she'd heard what you couldn't write down: "The women sing to each other there."

In the elusive southern rhythms, something keeps giving to lone recorders among the live oaks a holy cause — seldom won, always loved — the great challenge of putting the place of living music into words. ♦

# THE PICAYUNE CATCHES UP WITH DAVID DUKE

by Jeanne W. Amend

When David Duke became a Republican candidate for the Louisiana legislature in December 1988, he disavowed the white supremacist and neo-Nazi agenda he had espoused all of his adult life. New Orleans's only daily newspaper, *The Times-Picayune* (circulation 270,000), obligingly covered him as if his past had evaporated. It did report, in January 1989, that in the local telephone directory the addresses listed for Duke's residence and business were the same as the addresses listed for The National Association for the Advancement of White People and the Ku Klux Klan — but Duke assured the *Picayune* reporter that "There's no issue to it," and the story wasn't pursued.

Once Duke made the runoff race, anti-Duke activists began assiduously providing information to *The Times-Picayune* and other media pointing to Duke's continued racist activities. The most alarming revelation to surface involved the racial redistricting plan he had published in the mid-1980s in the newsletter of his white-supremacist National Association for the Advancement of White People: the plan divided the U.S. into separate countries, each reserved for a different minority. The *Shreveport Journal*, a 20,000-circulation daily that has since ceased publication, gave the plan front-page prominence; in *The Times-Picayune*, the issue was examined by a columnist, in the newspaper's "B" section.

In early March 1989, after his legislative victory, Duke addressed a Populist party convention in Chicago, telling the audience of neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and skinheads that he had run for office under the GOP label "because that's where so many of our people are," adding, "I am a Republican, but I



Andrea Molin/NYT Pictures

am and always will be a Populist Republican!" Unbeknownst to Duke, an opponent tape-recorded his remarks and later offered the story to the *Picayune*.

But the *Picayune* wasn't interested. (The story was subsequently offered to other news media, some of which did pick it up.) Nor did the newspaper publish the wire-service photograph of Duke shaking hands at the convention with American Nazi party vice-chairman Art Jones. Instead, the *Picayune*'s first and only acknowledgment of Duke's Populist party convention appearance came when Duke repudiated the picture as a "media smear." The paper duly noted where and when the photograph had been taken, and that Duke had run for president in 1988 on the Populist party ticket, but it failed to explain what the Populist party stands for or what Duke was doing at its convention.

On August 26, 1990, as Duke's U.S. Senate campaign entered its final weeks, *The Times-Picayune* published its first major profile of Duke. But many of the story's "revelations" had already been reported in other publications:

- *Finderskeepers*, the advice book for women Duke published under a female pseudonym in 1976 which included instructions on vaginal exercises, fellatio, and anal sex, had received front-page play in the *Shreveport Journal* on August 21, 1990.

- Duke's anti-Semitism and white-supremacist agenda had been explored in the New Orleans alternative weekly newspaper *Gambit* in June 1990.

- *Gambit* had also reported, in September 1989, that although Duke was in the ROTC at Louisiana State University, his affiliation with Nazism had precluded him from getting a military commission. Information about Duke's dysfunctional family background, attributed by the *Picayune* to an unauthorized biography of Duke published during the summer of 1990, had been first detailed in a *Gambit* article a year earlier.

The *Picayune* did unearth information about Duke's heavy gambling and stock market investing while claiming his income was too low to require filing state income tax returns. And it reported on his extensive plastic surgery and how into the late '80s he had held parties to celebrate Hitler's birthday.

During Duke's 1991 Louisiana gubernatorial primary campaign, *The Times-Picayune* reverted to its earlier minimalist coverage. Then, on October 19, came Duke's second-place finish in the primary elections. Suddenly, faced with the prospect of having a neo-Nazi as Louisiana's governor, *The Times-Picayune* devoted nearly a month of coverage aimed squarely and unapologetically at defeating Duke. A sampling of *Picayune* headlines tells the story:

WHAT THE REPUBLICANS CAN DO ABOUT DAVID DUKE (October 23);  
TWO LEGISLATORS ON DUKE PROBLEM (October 24);  
DUKE VICTORY WOULD COST LA., EXECS SAY and IF HE LOSES GOVERNOR'S BID, WILL DUKE TARGET [U.S. Senator John] BREAU? (October 26);  
JEWS FEAR RISE OF ANTI-SEMITISM, and BLACKS HAVE SEEN IT BEFORE (October 27);  
SPARING DUKE THE TOUGH QUESTIONS (November 6)

In a series of five consecutive editorials beginning October 27, the paper methodically built its case against Duke, marshaling evidence that he was not qualified to govern. The *Picayune* has circulated reprints of this coverage, portraying itself as having contributed to his defeat and as having been at the forefront of investigative reporting about him.

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# Political Ads: Decoding Hidden Messages

by Mark Crispin Miller

In 1988 the presidential race was wholly dominated, and its outcome probably determined, by the explosive Bush-Quayle propaganda. Indeed, there was little else going for the Republicans; and, in terms of propaganda, there was nothing going for the Democrats, whose every stumbling effort at mass suasion — e.g., the image of a helmeted Dukakis looking wee and goofy in that aimlessly zigzagging tank — was an outright gift to the much smarter propaganda team of Ailes-Atwater and their legions of devoted cadres.

And along with those hard professionals and their inept counterparts, there was (of course) a third communications entity that made a signal contribution to Bush-Quayle's propaganda: the news divisions of the major media, primarily (but not only) television. Typically, each correspondent would address the latest ad with some very

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## CAMPAIGN '92

obvious comment on the candidate's general tactical intentions. Rarely would he or she do what journalists ought to do with any piece of propaganda: expose its sly half-truths and outright lies, and then correct them.

In that gross campaign, the passive collusion of the press and the Ailes-Atwater dynamo had become so apparent that, soon afterwards, journalists and media handlers (for different reasons) both began to call for a new reportorial attentiveness to the content of political advertising. That call had some effect. Starting with the off-year campaigns of 1990, a number of newspapers and TV stations began to sift political ads for their untruths. This new effort tends to rely on a particular method. First, the ad is rebroadcast or (in print) roughly paraphrased; then the reporter sets the record straight, marshaling the facts so as to rebut the ad, which is thereby treated as a statement that can be verified or disproved. Whether on TV or in

print, in other words, this approach is wholly rational and verbal. It is concerned primarily with public data: the gray minutiae of PAC contributions, tax records, congressional achievement (if any, or if none), and so on.

Such sober correction is of course invaluable, a real civic necessity; but that approach is, in itself, far too limited to help the public see, and thus see through, the subtleties of propaganda. For, at their best, the TV spots work cinematically, through ingenious audiovisual implication; and they appeal to primal fears and longings, thereby moving us — all of us — much more deeply, and with a lot more violence, than we could ever be affected by the dull details of some ancient shift in policy or purely technical malfeasance.

What follows is a basic analysis of four Bush-Quayle campaign spots from 1988. This exercise is meant not as a comprehensive reading, but to demonstrate the kind of critical approach that today's propaganda really calls for.

Whatever its ostensible topic (taxes, crime, disarmament), each Bush-Quayle ad was also meant to realize a larger



propaganda strategy — a strategy determined not just by certain issues of the day, but by deep-seated cultural and psychic biases. Simply put, the aim of *all* the ads was to promote a devastating mythical dichotomy: Bush-Quayle was cleanness, newness, unity, and — therefore — **power**; Dukakis-(Willie Horton)-and-the-Democrats was filth and darkness, fragmentation, chaos, and — therefore — **weakness**. Bush-Quayle shone high and bright, as pure and mighty as a brand-new Diet Coke or bar of Coast; whereas Dukakis-(Willie Horton)-and-the-Democrats appeared to represent a toxic, stinking, bottomless morass, as inchoate and threatening as the primordial ooze — and/or as threatening as the realms of crud not yet wiped away by Drano and Tide, the multitudes of crawly vermin not yet wiped out by Raid and Combat.

But first, one of the “positive” Bush-Quayle ads:

1) Backed by a soothing blur of trees, and to the soft sound of a guitar plunking out a bit of gentle Muzak from (it seems) old Mexico, Columba Garnica Bush, the candidate’s low-key and attractive daughter-in-law, tells Hispanics (in Spanish) that George Bush cherishes Hispanic values and traditions — and “I believe him.”

As she speaks in close-up, the camera slowly backs away until the frame includes *her* quiet daughter, and a great white column on the left. Note how the clothing and the architectural details make up a partial frame-within-the-

frame, a bold right angle of protective whiteness: white balustrade, the white maternal skirt, the girl’s white dress — and that large, stately column, which is, so far, the ad’s strongest visual element. The quiet child appears well sheltered (or contained) at the crux of that right angle, safe between the column and her mama — but then the camera keeps on moving, gliding back and rightward, until the speaker is no longer centered and the tableau is destabilized.

As the camera keeps on moving to the side, a gap forms at the center of the frame — and there, at right, appears the very tall, patrician-looking Bush himself (red shirt), facing her expectantly across the leafy space that now divides them, and with a little grandson (blue shirt) perched beside him, opposite the mother and, like his granddad, looking at her: waiting for her.

Here is a moment of pictorial imbalance — and, therefore, of subtle tension, as we await the happy instant when that gap will be closed up, that imbalance rectified, the frame restabilized. The males’ leftward gazes seem to urge the mother forward, toward what is now the center of the scene. The candidate’s sheer size (the composition makes him look enormous) also seems to beckon her, as some great planet will draw lesser bodies toward itself. And so — inexorably — she moves away from her now-marginal position and cleaves herself unto George Bush, the tableau’s “natural” center.

And so the gap is closed, the scene

restored to symmetry, as the family comes to rest as a quiescent triangle, broad-based (visually), headed by a patriarch (literally), and therefore very “stable.” Bush has now replaced that white protective column, taking on its aura of stability — an aura reinforced by the ad’s careful color scheme. Certainly, the plain red-white-and-blue of the family’s vernal wardrobe deftly advertises “patriotism.” Aside from such clear symbolism, however, the colors also formally enhance the concluding scene of order. Note that all three Bush dependents wear bright white below the waist, a sameness that further bolsters the triangle’s base (and the protective frame of balustrade-and-column). The dark blue of grandson’s shirt and mother’s blouse, moreover, props the candidate appealingly on either side, while the man himself seems all the more outstanding by virtue of the red that only he has on.

A family man, but clearly *in control* of his menage: the daughter is above all deferential, the children eerily immobile, as if tranquilized. Thus the candidate appears as an old-fashioned, Mediterranean Dad-type, strict as well as loving: i.e., not a wimp. At the same time, the ad depicts (or would depict) George Herbert Walker Bush *not* as a stilted, hyper-active Yankee, but as a solid man of Latin warmth, filled with affection both for his own offspring and for all the other “brown ones” in the Western hemisphere. “As president,” he says at the end, “I have a lotta reasons to help Hispanics everywhere —

1



because I'll be answering to my grandkids, not just to history." The hint of Latin warmth is also visually conveyed by the (unlikely) redness of the candidate's shirt. In (as it were) reality, the old preppy favors drabber colors, but here he wears the red of chili powder and tomato paste — a red much like the red that glows before him in those potted blossoms placed beside his awkward foot, "anchoring" the triangle with their soft oval mass and presidential hue.

2) Throughout the "positive" ads, George Bush is thus visually characterized as the smiling apex of the family unit — standing tall and closing gaps and keeping everybody steady. In this shot (which ends an ad praising Reagan-Bush for nuclear disarmament), the candidate is again the headpiece of a familial mass, the homogenous whiteness of both his pullover and the baby's outfit combining tot and politician into one dazzling patriarchal monad. The swing, moreover, provides the necessary hint of insecurity, making George Bush seem all the more desirable as kindly overseer and big tall stabilizer. Here again the candidate appears as strong-but-kinder/gentler. In this case, the man's Soft Side is manifest in the maternal posture and the excessive (some might say fiendish) smile. Bush was often thus heavily pseudo-feminized in his advertising, as a way to woo (some might say fool) those women who suspected that he might, say, start a war or pack the Supreme Court to get *Roe v. Wade* repealed.

3) Whereas the pro-Bush spots end

with a reassuring image of the candidate-as-pillar-of-strength, the major attack ads *begin* with some towering object, but one that, unlike the "stable" Bush, is somehow teetering; and from that image of tenuous eminence the images proceed to drag us *downward*. Thus, in the first shot of "The Harbor," a dingy reddish marker ("12") bobs — clumsy, useless — in the snot-gray waters overwhelming Boston's dismal skyline. As the camera glides rightward past that dubious object, the voice-over makes it a damning symbol of Dukakis: "As a candidate, Michael Dukakis called Boston Harbor ..." — we then dissolve to another laterally floating shot (the camera jerking *leftward*) of a rotting wharf — "... 'an open sewer,'" the voice-over concludes, as the shots, linked by dissolves, appear to force us down, down, ever closer to the floating scum, as if the camera were about to pull us under.

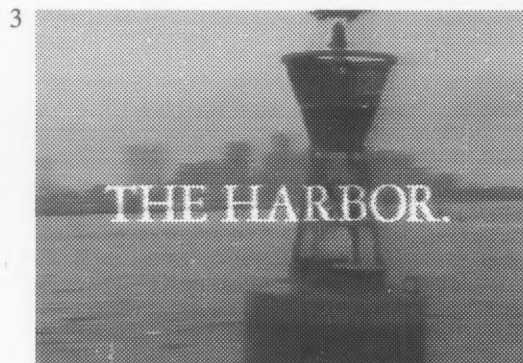
The ad works by threatening us not merely with "pollution," but with something like, or worse than, death: radical disintegration, terminal regression. The electronic score see-saws murkily, a sound as clogged and turbid as those waters; seagulls yelp, and there's a nauseating undertone of thick, toxic bubbling. We feel we're floundering, precambrial, amoebic — helpless, like the (evidently) futile governor of Massachusetts. The ad's technique, however, has a still more visceral effect. Whereas the pro-Bush shots progress intelligibly, here the unceasing back-and-forth disorients you, even makes

you feel a little sick — an appropriate reaction, given the ad's deliberately stomach-turning subtext.

Although there's a lot of common garbage in the water, and a sign (flashed briefly) warns of radioactivity, the harbor's real repellant — according to the ad's dream-logic — is not toxic waste or any other industrial by-product, but mere excrement — the primal horror of "an open sewer." At the end, the camera finally stops on a tableau of half-beached trash, repulsively suggestive: two big dead fish, a lot of little stones, and a trash-can lid that looks exactly like a toilet seat. By now, moreover, it isn't just Boston Harbor that's become a sea of shit. As the camera falls still, the voice-over indignantly concludes: "... and Michael Dukakis promises to do for America what he's done for Massachusetts." Under this threat of scat-apocalypse, the score electronically mimes the sounds of plumbing after someone's flushed: a burbling turbulence, a damp pause, and then a high chord sighingly fades in, fades out.

4) Again, a futile colossus, and then the camera takes us *down*; and here too that useless object is "Michael Dukakis."

A dim *boom!* extends into a slowed-down squeaky roar as, peering between huge bars, we see a tiny martial figure trying to hurry up the spiral staircase of a watchtower. Those aren't bars after all, but the watchtower's massive legs, now appearing smaller, smaller, as the camera zooms inexorably back in troubling little jerks. The dawn (sunset?) is



in black and white, the elements all etched in silhouette; and that anonymous would-be guardian (prisoner?) can't get up there to protect himself (us?) fast enough — because he's moving in slow motion. Nervously sped-up, the voice-over starts "explaining": "As governor, Michael Dukakis vetoed mandatory sentences for drug dealers." The zoom stops on the now-much-smaller, starkly isolated tower, that guard still making for the top. "He vetoed the death penalty," as the lone tower dissolves to (another) lone rifle-toting figure, also moving in slow motion, warily on patrol outside a daunting chain-link fence, topped with barbed wire.

The opening induces, all at once, a sense of claustrophobia, a rush of vertigo, a panicky uncertainty. Here (suggests the ad) you're stuck, you don't know what's behind you — and there's no protection. The poignant image of that lone guard dissolves to what became the best-known Bush-Quayle visual: "His revolving-door prison policy," intones the voice-over, "gave weekend furloughs to first-degree murderers not eligible for parole." As the guard fades away, he is at once replaced and overwhelmed by a slow horde of much-larger-looking men, impassively filing (in slo-mo they appear to *lurch*) through — there it is! — a revolving door of prison bars; that high-angle medium shot dissolves in turn to a longer, higher shot of the same zombie-fied procession, so that (again) we're looking *down* at an endless stream of

"filth," apparently Dukakis-generated.

The sequence (like the whole ad) is exquisitely misleading. After the line about "weekend furloughs to first-degree murderers," there appears along the bottom of the frame a terse caption: "268 Escaped." "While out," continues the voice-over, "many committed other crimes, like kidnapping and rape — and many are still at large." Along with that last clause, another caption, seemingly redundant: "Many are still at large." Those deft juxtapositions of print and speech imply that 268 first-degree murderers escaped from the furlough program, that "many" rapists and kidnapers "are still at large" — and/or even, if we take the captions serially, that *many first-degree murderers are still at large*. In fact, most of those escapees were petty offenders, but the deliberate audio-visual confusion helped the Bush-Quayle team to broadcast an alarmist fiction without having to utter bald-faced lies.

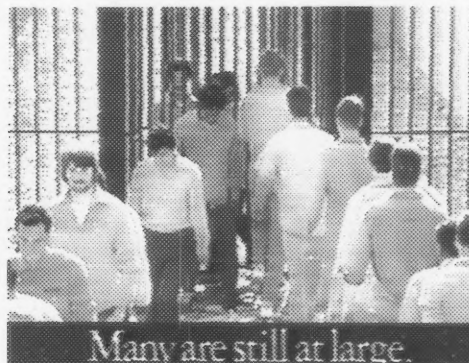
And yet the power of this notorious image lay not in such sly conjunctions, but in the careful visual arrangement. That phrase "revolving-door prison policy" implies, of course, that Massachusetts criminals could, thanks to Governor Dukakis, slip out of jail as easily as commuters streaming from a subway station. But the image makes an even more inflammatory statement. Note the racial composition of the prisoners: white men entering on the right, blacks and Hispanics exiting. In the next moment (below) there is the same racial pattern, albeit complicated by the

whites placed at the frame's far left. Those figures, however, would function only to allow Ailes-Atwater some deniability: "Racist? But there are white men in there too!" Such a claim would be disingenuous, because those remote Caucasians are, literally, beside the point. The eye is drawn not to the margins of the frame, but to the center — the vanishing point where the two human lines converge, and the point toward which the leftward movement of the entering whites also attracts our gazes. In other words, the "revolving door" effects an eerie racial metamorphosis, implying that the Dukakis prison system was not only porous, but a satanic source of negritude — a dark "liberal" mill that took white men and made them colored.

There is one last dissolve, as the "revolving door" itself is metamorphosed into the bad Dukakis-tower, now seemingly (and thank God!) under guard. As the dissolve begins, the voice-over speaks a variant of the "Harbor" tag-line: "Now Michael Dukakis says he wants to do for America ...," and then, with the dissolve complete: "... what he's done for Massachusetts." The same plumbing-sigh fades in, fades out, as — unconsciously — we face the prospect of our nation turned into a continental version of "Massachusetts" — i.e., an overflowing sewer, a fortress overrun, a nigger-factory. To those "persuaded" by the images, the final voice-over makes lots of sense: "America can't afford that risk." ♦



4







AP/Wide World

# Letter From Moscow

*Amid the chaos, Russian journalism gets a life*

by Susan Benesch

Inside the cavernous Moscow headquarters of *Pravda*, the former organ of the Soviet Communist party, journalists sat wrapped up in their overcoats on one of the first frigid days this fall. There was no heat.

There was also no landlord. The Communist party was gone, although some *Pravda* journalists were still carrying little red party membership cards around in their pockets. Boris Yeltsin

*Susan Benesch, who recently traveled to the Soviet Union, is Latin America correspondent for the St. Petersburg Times.*





AP/Wide World

had put his press ministry in charge of the party's old newspaper, but that didn't mean the ministry owned *Pravda*, either. Nobody did. Only four years ago, *Pravda* was one of the world's biggest newspapers, with eleven million circulation, until *glasnost* and *perestroika* briskly stripped it of at least nine million of its readers, then its party, and, briefly, its heat.

But *Pravda* still has a staff, and the staff has ideas. JOURNALISTS NEED PRIVATE PROPERTY TOO ran the headline over a plaintive front-page appeal on September 24. The piece argued that *Pravda*'s journalists are owed some property, since *Pravda* had donated its profits to the Communist party for decades. In an interview, *Pravda* staff members somehow figured the bill at about 800 million rubles, and in payment, they said, they wanted their newspaper and its building.

At about the same time, in the U.S., Victor Linnik, the senior *Pravda* correspondent in New York, was having his own difficulties. He was two months behind on the rent — "It's very, very high," he says — because he hadn't been paid by *Pravda* for four months. Finally, in late October, *Pravda* sent Linnik some money, in time to avoid eviction.

Linnik planned to go back to Moscow at the end of December if he could clear his debts, and he hoped to take another position at *Pravda*. The paper's other former New York correspondent, Vladimir Sukhoi, left town at



AP/Wide World

**BREAKING AWAY: *Pravda*'s first photo of a U.S. president, 1985 (top); *Komsomolskaya Pravda* editors pick gulf war photos, February 1991 (left); *Pravda*'s first advertisement, November 1991 (above)**

the end of September, after selling off the bureau's furniture and fax machine to pay his bills. Neither Sukhoi nor Linnik will be replaced.

Even before the failed coup in August, *Pravda* was running out of hard currency. By September, twenty-nine of its thirty foreign correspondents — the single exception being its free-lancing Paris correspondent — found themselves "in great debt," according to Vladislav Drobkov, the paper's foreign news editor, who was wearing a leather jacket as he spoke in the chilly *Pravda* offices. Drobkov became deputy editor in September, then moved to

Washington to become *Pravda*'s sole U.S. correspondent.

To balance its budget, *Pravda* is closing two-thirds of its foreign bureaus, leaving about ten worldwide. The paper has appealed to readers for donations, and some old Communist party members have pledged to send it the money they used to pay in party dues. In Moscow, 125 of *Pravda*'s 425 editorial staff members were to be fired. By order of the Russian Ministry of Press and Information, the remaining staff must compress itself into one-third as much space. New newspapers, including the Yeltsin government's *Rossiskaya Gazeta*, are moving onto other floors.

New newspapers have appeared all over Moscow during the last two years. Many have collapsed as the result of severe economic conditions, but others keep emerging. After so many years of gray, homogeneous journalism, this is a wild and disordered explosion.

Most of the new papers can be purchased in the long passages connecting Moscow subway stations, where vendors array themselves under greenish-yellow ceiling lights. As thousands of people streamed through a tunnel under Pushkin Square on a recent Friday evening, an old woman sold *Chas Pik* (Rush Hour), a new weekly from St. Petersburg, out of a shopping bag looped over her forearm. She had taped an open copy to the wall behind her, as an ad. A blond man had a stack of *Golos Vseleynoy* (Voice of the Universe) — a haphazard blend of UFO sightings, science fiction, and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. People were grabbing copies of *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (Independent Newspaper), a well-respected new daily, from the floor, where they lay neatly stacked on top of an unfolded paper bag.

Along the opposite wall at least thirty people had formed a line behind a rusted vending machine full of copies of *Vechernaya Moskva* (Evening Moscow). One old woman struggled with the metal lever and cursed, until finally the machine spat a newspaper through its vertical slot.

The most popular "newspapers" of all seem to be pornographic ones. Pornography was banned until *glasnost*.

Now, papers like *Sex-Hit* can be found in the subways or displayed on folding tables on the street, and they draw such crowds of men that one entrepreneur at the Arbatskaya metro station posted a sign — “one ruble to look.” Those who are curious but bashful can buy *SPID-Info* (AIDS Info), which displays sexual diagrams and instructions under the guise of AIDS prevention.

Russians also display enough hunger for regular newspapers to make an American journalist drool. Readers hang around the office of *Moskovskiy Novosti* (Moscow News), one of the most respected reborn Soviet papers, awaiting the weekly's fresh copies, and then debate their contents loudly in the street. Foreign readers can subscribe to *Moscow News's* editions in English, Estonian, French, German, and Spanish. English-language readers can even call up the paper on their personal computers the same day it comes out in Russian.

And many Soviet journalists work with all the enthusiasm and recklessness of a teenager borrowing the car keys for the first time. There are really two kinds of journalists — the new ones, fresh out of college or from other jobs, and the veterans, trained for years in the orthodox Soviet media. Ironically, some of the old guard have been the most eager reformers. The reason, according to Alexei Izyumov, a Soviet political analyst who has studied the press, is that in their old jobs “they had to lie, to bend their thought systematically. That explains the strength of their drive toward *glasnost*.” Those journalists began pushing in that direction during the 1980s, and now younger, newer journalists are taking over from them, some coming from other walks of life.

At the weekly *Argumenty i Fakty* (Arguments and Facts), for example, the editorial staff of about fifty includes a doctor, a civil engineer, a police inspector, and a man who used to design spacesuits. *Argumenty i Fakty* started out in 1978 as a virtually unknown bulletin for a society of scholars. Under the direction of editor Vladislav Starkov, it changed into a general weekly, and it grew at an incredible rate, to 1.5 million in 1987, 10 million in 1988, and an incredible 33.4 million in 1990 — a circulation figure that got into *The*

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## Many Soviet journalists work with all the enthusiasm and recklessness of a teenager borrowing the car keys for the first time

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*Guinness Book of World Records.*

The secret of its success is that it was the first mass-circulation paper to break out of the stultifying style of orthodox Soviet newspapers. Instead of printing what party chiefs thought people should read, *Argumenty i Fakty* tried the radical technique of publishing what people seemed to want to read, according to Andrei Uglanov, the former spacesuit designer who is now the paper's news editor. “Our main principle was to answer the questions in our letters,” he says. That is a formidable task, since Uglanov says the paper receives 4,000 to 5,000 letters a day.

In contrast to other Soviet newspapers, *Argumenty i Fakty* doesn't editorialize much. The paper is full of interviews and terse muckraking stories, like one in September on a KGB-run telephone system for Communist party chiefs that cost 500 million rubles a year.

Uglanov says that *Argumenty i Fakty* managed to survive in the past because it grew beyond the control of the authorities and because it was careful to hedge its bets, publishing interviews with important party officials alongside its riskier articles.

Nonetheless, Mikhail Gorbachev tried to force editor Starkov to resign after *Argumenty i Fakty* published an opinion poll unfavorable to Gorbachev in October 1989. Starkov flatly refused. He ran for office instead, hoping to gain protection under a provision that forbids part-time legislators from being fired from their regular jobs. He won, and remained the editor.

Since August, *Argumenty i Fakty* and other “alternative” papers have faced a dilemma: the Communists they criticized have been officially disbanded, so

they are no longer an opposition press. The salty, indignant tone has faded from some papers that were unabashed Yeltsin supporters, and now they hesitate to criticize their man. *Argumenty i Fakty's* understated style made it easier to adjust.

But its circulation is falling anyway because of competition from so many new papers. *Nezaviscemaya Gazeta* (Independent Newspaper), for example, printed its first issue on December 21, 1990. At that time the staff was six people, who worked in a small room borrowed from the Moscow City Council, recalls Yuri Leonov, one of the paper's staff members. The city council lent the paper 300,000 rubles as start-up capital, about \$15,000 at black-market exchange rates at that time, or \$167,000 at the legal commercial rate.

Now Leonov works in the paper's new building, which until recently was a notebook factory. One of the factory's conveyor belts still rests in a corner and huge yellow pipes snake across the ceiling. “This is the international department of our newspaper,” Leonov says, with a sweep of his left arm that takes in his desk and two desks beside it. The foreign department has no wire services and no staff correspondents. But, Leonov says, *Nezaviscemaya Gazeta's* blossoming reputation has already netted it sources in the foreign ministry and guest columns by other papers' foreign correspondents.

The paper runs much more commentary than hard news. The day after George Bush announced the withdrawal of land-based tactical nuclear weapons from Europe, for example, *Nezaviscemaya Gazeta's* front-page headline declared THE COLD WAR HAS ENDED WITH A COMPLETE VICTORY BY THE USA. A story underneath analyzed Gorbachev's efforts to hold the Soviet Union together. Another front-page piece discussed who might defend the August coup-plotters in court. The only hard-news story on page one described rioting at a Moscow rock concert.

Asked who owns *Nezaviscemaya Gazeta*, Leonov says wryly, “I would like to know.” As at other papers, nobody knows quite who they are working for, but staff members say they would like to set up a stock society and hold most of the shares themselves.

Across town, in the offices of the daily *Moskovsky Komsomoletz*, a stack of bricks is piled on one side of the entryway and a pile of bags of cement on the other side. Banging and scraping goes on most of the day as workers refurbish the office. "I want the journalists to feel they are working in good conditions. We have a new newspaper," said Pavel Gusev, the editor-in-chief.

Indeed, *Moskovsky Komsomoletz* is another "new" newspaper that existed before as a pro-government organ, but has changed completely. Like the editors at other papers that made *glasnost* by testing its limits, Gusev was regularly summoned to the office of the first secretary of the Moscow Communist party, to be screamed at for his latest sins. "I would be silent and then say: 'I will correct it,'" Gusev says. "I never did correct it."

"Because of that treatment, Gusev became a basket case," says Denis Gorelov, the paper's fervent twenty-four-year-old film critic and political writer. "He's better now."

"Our editors were like a buffer between us and the authorities," Gorelov adds. "They softened our blows directed upward and they softened the blows from above directed at us."

The paper's name comes from the *Komsomol*, the Communist Youth League, and it was the organ of the league's Moscow branch. Its national cousin, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, has also changed. Now both run indignantly anti-Communist material under the same old names. Last March, when the Soviet government cracked down on pro-Yeltsin demonstrators, *Moskovsky Komsomoletz* altered its front page so it looked as if an army tank was crashing through the masthead.

Early in 1989, *Moskovsky Komsomoletz* began running ads — a radical idea at the time. Now it has gone further, opening Agency OK, its own in-house ad firm. Gusev, a former *Komsomol* functionary, has even more ambitious business plans. The paper already promotes rock concerts and is involved in other business ventures, which he preferred not to discuss. He did mention his plans to buy "houses on the Mediterranean" for a future tourist operation.

## The papers are struggling not only with the disastrous economy, but with the fact that many readers are now disgusted with politics

Other newspapers also have business ties, including foreign investors. Such ties are essential as the papers fight for subscribers in an increasingly crowded market and pay skyrocketing prices for newsprint. Nearly all the papers are losing circulation. New political freedom has allowed newspapers to open, but economic crisis will force many of them to fold.

The papers are struggling not only with the disastrous economy and with each other, but also with the fact that many readers who were thrilled to read newspapers a year ago are now disgusted with politics and grimly obsessed with the price of potatoes.

Even *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, an old, hard-line Communist newspaper determined to stick to its ideological guns, has found itself some private backers — Galina Vassilievna Zavidia and her husband, Andrei Fyodorovich, who also run an "information services" firm. The entrepreneurial couple proudly describe themselves as communists.

"For us it is quite natural," she says. "Private property and private business activity do not contradict communist thought." Galina Vassilievna was a quality-control inspector at a research institute before she and her husband opened a vegetable and fruit cooperative in 1988 and then opened their information firm. She would not say how much money the couple is prepared to invest in *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, but she did say that their commitment is "something, if it's possible to say so, spiritual."

The couple expects *Sovetskaya Rossiya* to maintain its line, although "it may be more informative, with fewer enormous stories about party functionaries." It will also be "more modern, more attractive," she says.

The diametric opposite of *Sovetskaya Rossiya* is *Comersant* (Businessman or Merchant), one of the newest and hippest papers. It bills itself as "the Soviet business weekly," aims at new Soviet yuppies, and publishes a mix of political and business news. *Comersant* is often criticized for being too fast and loose with facts, but it is admired for its witty style.

Its staff seems to have embraced capitalism wholeheartedly. When asked for an interview about his newspaper, *Comersant* news editor Andrei Vassiliev asked whether "you are aware that my fee is \$100 an hour."

Told that American journalists are not accustomed to paying for interviews, he replied, "If you want to know about my private life or my taste in wine, that's one thing, but if you want to make use of my professional knowledge, I must be compensated." He later changed his mind.

*Comersant* has published some of the spiciest examples of the new journalistic style. To Soviets, used to the old stiff and bureaucratic style, the change is shocking.

When a Russian religious society distributed complimentary Bibles to legislators inside the Russian White House in September, *Comersant* wrote, "The Russians took the distribution of God's Word in the same way as any other freebie: extraordinary lines and crowds appeared, and due to an excess of piety many demanded several sets at once.... In the atmosphere of ardent Christian spirituality it seemed that the deputies would rush in a single herd to baptize themselves in the nearby Moscow River — but then, alas, the supply of free Bibles ended."

The same issue of *Comersant* had a story about the first Soviet bank allowed by Visa International to issue credit cards, reports on what was happening on the new stock exchanges in Moscow and Siberia, and a story about *Izvestia*, the newspaper that used to be the official organ of the Soviet government. Like *Pravda*, *Nezaviscimaya Gazeta*, and other papers, *Izvestia* is hoping to turn itself into a private stock society, although, as *Comersant* pointed out, it is not at all clear who will have the rights to the newspaper's property and name. ♦

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# THE PAUL TOBENKIN MEMORIAL AWARDS

Columbia University is seeking entries for the annual Paul Tobenkin Memorial Awards.

The annual award, which carries a cash prize, honors "outstanding achievement in the field of newspaper writing in the fight against racial and religious hatred, intolerance, discrimination, and every form of bigotry, reflecting the spirit of Paul Tobenkin."

Mr. Tobenkin, who died in 1959, was a reporter for *The New York Herald Tribune* for 25 years. His main professional concern was the reporting of the war against bigotry in the United States.

All entries should consist of stories published during the calendar year 1991. The deadline for submission is February 15, 1992. The judges will make their selection during March and the winner will be announced by the Graduate School of Journalism.

Each entry must consist of FOUR copies of each of the following: 1) a letter from the editor; 2) a brief biographical resumé of the reporter; 3) clips that best typify the reporter's work.

*Entries should be sent to:*

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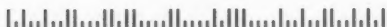
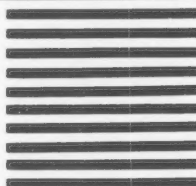
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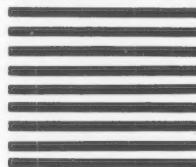
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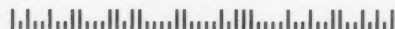
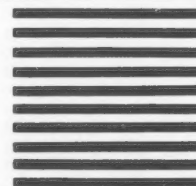
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## JUDGMENT CALL

# THE CHUTZPAH MAN vs. DEN OF THIEVES

BY MICHAEL HOYT

One of the first lessons young reporters learn from a city desk is that in a run-of-the-mill crime story the race or ethnic group of the people involved is not "relevant," not to be included. Yet to censor ethnic elements in an ambitious piece, one that tries to include a sense of context and personal background, can be to succumb to a kind of racial prudishness.

This is tricky territory, of course. The lines between sensitivity, oversensitivity, and insensitivity are not laid out in some handbook. Crusaders for frank and honest talk about other people's ethnic groups sometimes have other agendas. New York journalists recently covered a pair of such crusaders at City College: philosophy professor Michael Levin's smooth reasoning about black crime rates — and about the logic of white fear of young black males — led him to suggest that black youths be forced to ride in special police-patrolled subway cars (a position he submitted in an academic paper but later recanted); black studies professor Leonard Jeffries cobbled together his notion of Hollywood history with the fact that movies have long denigrated blacks to declare in a speech that "Russian Jewry and ... their financial partners, the

Michael Hoyt is associate editor of CJR.



John Ficarra/Woodfin Camp

Mafia, put together a system of destruction of black people."

Into this terrain of real and perceived ethnic slurs now rides Alan M. Dershowitz, the famous lawyer, in defense of Michael Milken, his equally well-known client, who pleaded guilty to six felony charges in 1990. Milken, the former junk-bond king, sits in a California prison awaiting developments on more than 100 civil suits filed against him and on his motion to reduce his ten-year sentence.

Milken's rise and fall, of course, was one of the biggest news stories of the 1990s. The latest book on those Gordon Gekko years is *Den of Thieves*, by Pulitzer Prize-winner James B. Stewart, now the front-page editor of *The Wall Street Journal*. *Den of Thieves* traces how a number of traders like Milken got greedy, and it goes beyond what he admitted in his plea bargain with the government.

Dershowitz is an author, too, most recently of *Chutzpah*, a call for members of his generation of American Jews

**Alan Dershowitz says a best seller critical of his client Michael Milken (above) is an "anti-Semitic screed."**

to demand first-class status in a mostly Christian nation, and to assert themselves more forcefully against subtle anti-Semitism. And Dershowitz has employed a chutzpah defense of Milken, attacking *Den of Thieves* on two levels.

First, he launched a frontal attack on Stewart's reporting in a pair of op-ed pieces in the October 16 *Wall Street Journal* (with Stewart blasting back, also twice). The unusual exchange was followed by an even more unusual full-page ad (about \$45,000) in *The New York Times* the next day, and half-page ads in a trio of papers after that. Dershowitz and Harvey Silverglate, another Milken lawyer, are distributing to reporters a weighty "Milken/Stewart Resource Book"; its thesis is that Stewart locked himself into a pro-prose-

cutor, anti-Milken position early on. (Dershowitz himself once held an anti-Milken position before the financier became his client, but he didn't stay locked into it. "I smell a rat in the Milken plea bargain," he wrote in *New York Newsday* in April 1990, in a column that argued that the "junk bond king" got off easy.)

The other line of attack — a charge of anti-Semitic stereotyping — was deployed in a section of the full-page "Open Letter" in the *Times*. *Den of Thieves* had received a glowing review in *The New York Times Book Review* in October from one Michael M. Thomas,

who writes a money-world column in *The New York Observer*. Thomas also writes novels, and his latest, *Hanover Place*, was criticized for what a couple of reviewers saw as a special problem — that it depicted anti-Semitism in the financial world with a bit too much enthusiasm. The hardest shot came from Judith Martin, aka "Miss Manners," who wrote, also in *The New York Times Book Review*: "Doing the author the courtesy of assuming that *Hanover Place* is intended only as a dramatization of Wall Street anti-Semitism from 1924 to 1990, rather than an example of it, is a strain."

Taking Thomas's alleged anti-Semitism as a given, Dershowitz strove to tar Stewart with the same brush, attacking him for his "gratuitous descriptions by religious stereotypes" in *Den of Thieves*. In a preemptive attack on Thomas's review, a letter to *Times Book Review* editor Rebecca Sinkler, Dershowitz went further, calling *Den of Thieves* an "anti-Semitic screed," and arguing that a reviewer other than Thomas would have pointed this out. Stewart, for his part, finds these charges, as he told *New York* magazine, "hateful and unseemly and unfair."

Dershowitz's complaints may be heartfelt or merely part of a defense lawyer's public relations strategy. Or both. In any case, his anti-Semitism accusation has thrust the ethnic-editing issue into the limelight. The following excerpts may help illuminate not just this controversy but the larger question: When should the race or ethnicity of the people we portray be part of their story?

"If I point out that nine out of 10 people involved in street crimes are black, that's an interesting sociological observation," Thomas says. "If I point out that nine out of 10 people involved in securities indictments are Jewish, that is an anti-Semitic slur. I cannot sort out the difference...."

"Unfortunately, I happened to write a book that reproduces with devastating accuracy the sort of clubland rhetoric of anti-Semitism," he says. "There's an authenticity to it that I can't keep out of the mouths of my characters."

from a January 23, 1990, profile of Michael Thomas by Howard Kurtz in *The Washington Post*

Should a people who survived genocide respond to subtle bigotry it feels but cannot clearly identify? Can it afford to risk the charge of collective paranoia and the dangers of crying wolf? Can it afford not to?...

When Jews complain about anti-Semitism or anti-Zionism, they are often made to feel that they are oversensitive. Blacks are expected to speak and react strongly about any manifestation of antiblack attitudes, as well they should. We, too, should feel proud to vigorously defend Jewish rights.

from Chutzpah by Alan Dershowitz

[Anti-Semitism] was not a new theme for the Milken team. When business writer Connie Bruck published *The Predators' Ball*, her book on Milken and Drexel's junk-bond business, a Drexel lawyer accused

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—a reader's letter to Sobesednik, August 1990

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Bruck of being anti-Semitic. "I remember a lawyer at Cahill Gordon & Reindel screaming at me and accusing me of anti-Semitism," Bruck says. "And I'm Jewish, so that made it all the more unpleasant. It all comes from Milken. Milken told friends of his, who repeated it to me, that he believed the government's investigation was all fueled by anti-Semitism."

from a November 11, 1991, article by Jeanie Kasindorf in New York magazine

This is an absolutely splendid book and a tremendously important book, as good a book on Wall Street as I have ever read....

James B. Stewart ... charts the way through a virtual solar system of speculation, past planets large and small, from a metaphorical Mercury representing the penny-ante takings of Dennis B. Levine's small fry, past the middling (\$10 million in inside-trading profits) Mars of Mr. Levine himself, along the multiple rings of Saturn — Ivan F. Boesky, his confederate Martin A. Siegel of Kidder, Peabody, and Mr. Siegel's confederate Robert Freeman of Goldman, Sachs — and finally back to great Jupiter: Michael R. Milken, the greedy Beverly Hills manipulator who built a multi-billion-dollar junk-bond kingdom in which some of the nation's greatest names in industry and finance would find themselves entrapped and corrupted.

It is a fine, spicy tale. But to stop with that is to miss the book's immense importance: it at long last gives us a full and true record of systemic criminal behavior in the financial markets....

from a review of James B. Stewart's *Den of Thieves* by Michael M. Thomas in the October 13, 1991, New York Times Book Review

Thomas could not have "signed up" to review a better book to achieve his anti-Semitic, anti-Milken agenda. Stewart's book — aptly entitled *Den of Thieves*, which derives from the Biblical story of Jesus chasing the Jewish money lenders out of the Temple — is itself an anti-Milken and anti-Semitic screed. The Jewish backgrounds of all the "bad guys" are emphasized. The author (like the reviewer) seems preoccupied by Jews....

It is shockingly inappropriate that a book which itself relies on anti-Semitic stereotypes and generalizations should have been given to, or taken by, a reviewer who the *Times Book Review* has itself suggested may be anti-Semitic. You have said that the review itself does not deal with the Jewish issue. That is the point. It praises the book without alerting the reader — as another reviewer might have — to its stereotypes.

from Alan Dershowitz's September 30, 1991, letter to Rebecca Sinkler, editor of The New York Times Book Review, asking her to kill Thomas's review of *Den of Thieves* or to run a box expressing a "different point of view" along with it

[Stewart] begins by introducing his four main players in such lively circumstances that they jump off the page....

Not only does Mr. Stewart lend these people dimension, he also makes you root for them by showing how as Jews they were bucking a stodgy WASP Establishment that had always excluded them in the past.

from a review of *Den of Thieves* by Christopher Lehmann-Haupt in the October 28, 1991, New York Times

In 1971, Burnham & Co. merged with Drexel — an odd match. Burnham was mostly Jewish, filled with rough-and-tumble traders who survived on their selling skills. Drexel, by contrast, had an old-line aversion to hard sales tactics and a steadily dwindling roster of corporate clients who increasingly opted for firms with more aggressive distribution networks. Drexel was tottering, surviving largely on its reputation and its historical status as a major-bracket firm. Indeed, Tubby Burnham sought out Drexel as a merger partner primarily to hoist his company out of the submajor bracket and attract more underwriting work....

The survivors of the two firms still mostly shunned one another, even now, three years after the merger. As they walked

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through the firm, Burnham told Joseph that when he first met the head of Drexel at the time of the merger, he'd asked how many of the firm's more than 200 employees were Jews. He was told that there were a total of three. One, Burnham said, was the man he wanted Joseph to meet: Michael Milken....

Robert Wilkis gazed across the crowded room high in Citicorp's Manhattan headquarters. Never before had he seen such a concentration of young WASPs. Had they all gravitated to banking like salmon following the instinct to swim upstream? The 1977 welcoming cocktail party had underscored his sense of isolation and difference....

Then he spotted someone who looked even more out of place than he felt. The guy was standing by himself. Unlike the others, most of whom looked like former Ivy League athletes, he was overweight, with longish hair and a dark moustache. Wilkis moved closer and saw the name printed on his name-plate: Dennis Levine.

"What's a nice Jewish boy like you doing in a place like this?" Wilkis asked.  
from *Den of Thieves*, by James B. Stewart

**ROBERT NOVAK:** Why do you refer to them as Jews? Why is it important to refer to them as Jews?

**STEWART:** There aren't constant references. Most of the references are in the context of the characters themselves discussing this.

**NOVAK:** You mention Bar Mitzvahs.

**STEWART:** Dennis Levine comes to Wall Street and he says, "I don't think I'm going to get a fair shake. There's discrimination against me because I'm Jewish." And indeed in the background of Wall Street, that wasn't entirely an irrational sentiment. There are full characters. There are good characters who are Jewish. There are bad characters. There are bad characters who are Christian. The problem here was that everyone — the bad guys here lost sight of their religious upbringing, Christian or Jewish, and turned to crime. They weren't religious enough.

from *CNN's Crossfire*, October 31, 1991

So there you have it. The good guys (read: Christians) drive Milken and his band (read: Jews) out of Wall Street (the Temple).

Most of us in mainstream journalism have learned not to mention skin color or religion or sexual preference anymore unless we can show it's important — which it usually isn't....

These things don't leap out of the book at you, but, given my background, I felt my skin crawl. Because, you see, this book deals with material I'm familiar with from both my career and my personal life. I was one of

## "It's only safe to identify a person ethnically or racially in a positive context.... 'Italian-American auto executive' is okay. 'Italian-American mobster' is forbidden"

Richard Cohen, *Washington Post*

the first journalists to question Milken's activities, and was a co-author of a 1984 *Forbes* magazine cover story that exposed some of the members of what came to be known as the Drexel Ring. I have written extensively about the junkmeisters since — including a good number of them who aren't Jewish. I'm also a proud and committed Jew whose education includes two years of part-time study at the Jewish Theological Seminary, majoring in history. I've also known Milken for four years, as a subject and as an off-and-on friend (off whenever I've written something unflattering about his sleazy business dealings).

I don't think that Stewart, whom I consider a first-class journalist and a decent guy, is an anti-Semite. He told me his title came out of Bartlett's "Familiar Quotations," and that the temple refers to the New York Stock Exchange, whose building looks, architecturally, like a temple. He says the publisher (Simon & Schuster) picked the four names on the cover, that the religions of all the major players in the book, not just Jews, are identified. Through ignorance and insensitivity, however, Stewart has written a book with subtle anti-Semitic undertones. His editors should have picked up on them even if he didn't. The book would have been just as

### Dershowitz: Chutzpah man



Frank Capri/Saga

good (or bad) had Stewart chosen a different title and eliminated mention of religion, or explained why it matters. Instead, *Den of Thieves* confirms the prejudices of people who want to think badly of Jews....

from an October 18 column by Allan Sloan in *New York Newsday*

Having perused the book in question and keeping an eagle eye out for the allegedly offensive passages (I can spot the word "Jew" even in a closed book), I have to find Dershowitz guilty of yelling anti-Semitism in a crowded *shtetl* (translation upon request). He's off base.

From the standpoint of Jews, the unfortunate fact is that many of the most prominent of the Wall Street bad guys just happened to be Jewish....

If Stewart is guilty of anything it's breaking the Cohen Rule when dealing with ethnic groups. It's only safe to identify a person ethnically or racially in a positive context. For instance, "Jewish Nobel prize winner" is acceptable. "Jewish stock swindler" is not. "Italian-American auto executive" is okay. "Italian-American mobster" is forbidden. "The well-known black psychologist" is all right but not "the black drug dealer." Down deep we all understand the rules.

But these rules shackle journalists and muffle the truth. They amount to censorship — pre-censorship or self-censorship, maybe, but something short of telling it like it is. I happen to write as someone who was critically mugged for once writing sympathetically about merchants who refused to admit young black males into their stores. Among other things, I was accused of noticing what the merchants already had: Young black males commit most of the crime in Washington. Naturally, I was called a racist.

A person's race or ethnicity ought not to matter. But it does. On Wall Street, it mattered to almost everyone — to Jews of Eastern European heritage who were, on the basis of moxie and merit, busting into certain firms, to other Jews who were appalled at some of what was happening, and to non-Jews, few of whom don't notice or don't care about ethnicity. By blasting Stewart (a full-page ad, for crying out loud!) for doing nothing more than stating the truth, Dershowitz has attempted to discredit his reporting by besmirching his character — and, in the process, making Milken seem a victim of religious bigotry. Dershowitz's accusation, beside the point and below the belt, is a form of scapegoatism that comes perilously close to what it purportedly condemns. That, I suppose, is what's really meant by chutzpah.

from a column by Richard Cohen in the October 24, 1991, *Washington Post* ♦

# THE CLOSING OF THE JOURNALISTIC MIND

BY HOWARD M. ZIFF

It may just be this year's anxiety of choice, but fear continues to grow among journalism professors that they are unloved. Take two recent examples.

A professor from the University of Southern California, writing in *Editor & Publisher*, acknowledges that when newspaper editors get together with educators at a conference they will "engage in a certain amount of j-school bashing," but, the professor goes on to say, the intensity of the "ill-informed, arrogant, and mean-spirited" criticism at a recent meeting nonetheless left her "stunned."

The editors complained that journalism school professors are a "bunch of washed-up incompetents," that their curricula are filled with irrelevant junk toned up as theory, and that their students are unable to write, spell, or read.

Meanwhile, a University of Missouri journalism teacher writes a column for the opinion page of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* to complain that his academic colleagues don't properly esteem and reward professors whose primary qualifications are those of accomplished professionals. They have more trouble getting hired, promoted, and tenured than persons who chug

*Howard M. Ziff, a former reporter and editor at the Chicago Daily News, is a professor of journalism at the University of Massachusetts.*

along getting a doctorate and publishing articles in scholarly journals.

Nor is there comfort in the thirty-three-page report on journalism education issued in 1990 by the Education for Journalism Committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. The editors are worried. They see schools of communications in which journalism students are outnumbered by advertising and public relations students, courses that focus more on "common elements of communication and less on ... newspaper journalism," and faculties increasingly drawn from the ranks of PhDs in communications. Where is it all leading?

The ASNE report, based on responses to a nationwide questionnaire, finds that editors "continue to hold firmly to traditional values" in journalism education, but asks: Do journalism educators?

The problem is that many journalism educators, and most editors, have failed to go beyond ritual First Amendment fundamentalism in articulating journalist values. They have failed to realize the full implications of the foundation myth of journalism education, enunciated by Joseph Pulitzer in 1902: "Journalism is, or ought to be, one of the great and intellectual professions."

It is easy enough to say that the foundation myth is only so much self-serving rhetoric, but how much more substantially it rings than does the definitional myth of so many of today's academic administrators: Journalism is, or ought to be, a thing that gets taught in a college of communications.

By this definition, journalism is a sibling of things like advertising, public relations, and television production. Indeed, an Ohio State University national survey identifies eighteen communications specializations (plus "other") in which degrees are granted by undergraduate schools of journalism/communications. More and more, the journalism department attracts big box-office enrollment, and, like Brunhilde in *Die Walküre*, may sing the loudest among the bumptious sisters; nonetheless, it is considered a subordinate study that falls under the master discipline, communications.

The discipline known as communications was put together, beginning in the 1930s, with borrowings from psycholo-

gy and sociology, as well as market research and elements from moribund speech departments. After World War II, the names of departments, colleges, schools, and scholarly organizations changed to reflect the new discipline's increasing size and its dominance in graduate research. Some outsiders may have difficulty determining just what communications is, but its claims are imperial.

At the University of Massachusetts, for instance, the communication department (an entity distinct from the journalism department) says in the latest catalogue that it "works from the position that social realities are constituted, maintained, and changed by the process of communication." This definition covers everything from a distinguished graduate research program to undergraduate courses about communication theory, movies, public speaking, rhetoric, advertising, politics, teaching speech in secondary schools, and coaching the debating team.

Journalism departments, rather than creating their own advanced research-degree programs, were content, with notable exceptions, to surrender the field to communications, which trains faculty who have those doctoral degrees widely held as necessary to give intellectual respectability to a journalism faculty. Meanwhile, the communications empire gets bigger and journalism's share of the turf, however tenaciously defended, gets smaller.

Journalism students, moreover, often must pay what might be termed a "communications tax" levied on journalism by the college of communications. The curriculum varies from school to school, of course, but at most universities these undergrads are required to take from one to four courses in common with students from advertising, public relations, and the other liege subjects of the communications empire. Thus, the almost universally required course called Introduction to Mass Communications is usually a package tour in which journalism is accorded a two- or three-week stopover somewhere between television, records, radio and public relations, and advertising, all putatively tied together by communications theory.

Other farragoes include media law



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and, increasingly, mass media ethics and writing for the media. The media law course covers everything from *The New York Times Company v. Sullivan* and broadcast licensing regulations to Federal Trade Commission controls over advertising. The course in media writing may with fine impartiality combine training in writing news stories, press releases, film scripts, and advertisements. The media ethics course may contain segments on journalism alongside violence in comic books and the ethical responsibilities of press agents to their clients.

Editors responding to the questionnaire on which the ASNE report was based showed a healthy skepticism of this communications model of journalism education. Only 44 percent thought, for instance, that it was proper that advertising be taught in "journalism/mass communications" schools, and only 42 percent countenanced the teaching of public relations. In ranking nine kinds of theory courses, editors gave the lowest scores for possible utility to courses in mass communications and the highest ratings to courses in journalism ethics.

The ASNE report also reflected the criticism that the communications model awards higher prestige to professors with doctorates in communications than to those whose principal qualifications are distinguished and continued professional achievement in journalism.

Academic administrators make grave pronouncements about a "proper balance" in the faculty between "academics" and "professionals" and pledge to take journalistic achievement into account in considering hiring, promotion, and tenure. The problem is not that these pledges are insincere, but that journalism often does not have the same kind of academic identity and home base as do the other professions or writing, music, and art. In a college of mass communications, a professional journalist is almost always playing away, while communications "academics," who have set the ground rules, are playing on their home field.

Many journalism teachers are acutely unhappy with this situation, but they fear that by cutting loose from the protective cover of a college of communications they would only find themselves

## Pulitzer's Vision

There are many political reformers among the clergy, but the pulpit as an institution is concerned with the Kingdom of Heaven, not with the Republic of America. There are many public-spirited lawyers, but the bar as a profession works for its retainers, and no law-defying trust ever came to grief from a dearth of legal talent to serve it. Physicians work for their patients and architects for their patrons. The press alone makes the public interests its own. "What is everybody's business is nobody's business" — except the journalist's; it is his by adoption. But for his care almost every reform would fall stillborn. He holds officials to their duty. He exposes secret schemes of plunder.... He brings all classes, all professions together, and teaches them to act in concert on the basis of their common citizenship.

The Greeks thought that no republic could be successfully governed if it were too large for all the citizens to come together in one place. The Athenian democracy could all meet in the popular assembly. There public opinion was made, and accordingly as the people listened to a Pericles or to a Cleon the state flourished or declined. The orator that reaches the American democracy is the newspaper. It alone makes it possible to keep the political blood in healthful circulation in the veins of a continental republic.... Virtue, said Montesquieu, is the principle of a republic, and therefore a republic... is the hardest of all to preserve. For there is nothing more subject to decay than virtue.

Our Republic and its press will rise or fall together. An able, disinterested, public-spirited press, with trained intelligence to know the right and courage to do it, can preserve that public virtue without which popular government is a sham and a mockery. A cynical, mercenary, demagogic press will produce in time a people as base as itself. The power to mould the future of the Republic will be in the hands of the journalists of future generations.

—Joseph Pulitzer

From "The College of Journalism," May 1904, *North American Review*.



even more isolated and vulnerable. (Even graduate journalism schools emphasizing professional training and with histories as distinguished as those of Columbia University and the University of California at Berkeley have critics on their own campuses who challenge their right to exist.) Better to accept career heartaches and bureaucratic annoyances within the bowels of the mass communications model than to risk an even more exposed position outside of it, in a school of journalism within a university, where you must defend yourself against charges from high-toned academics of being engaged exclusively in cranking out newsroom foot soldiers who get the punctuation right and do what they're told.

Serious professional journalists as well as serious journalism educators ask more of journalism education than producing employees adept at quickly and cheaply replicating the old routines — and the old mistakes. They know that it flies in the face of their own experience

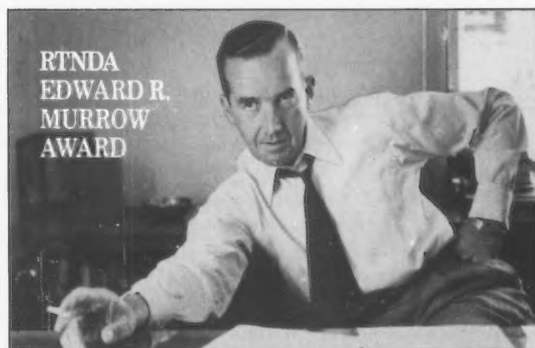
of journalism education to treat journalism education institutionally as merely one of a congeries of "communications practices." They know what Pulitzer knew, that there is something about journalism that makes it different from taxidermy or selling life insurance or any of the other passions that fill up a lifetime.

To be sure, journalism is not as old as philosophy or lyric poetry, but it didn't begin with Watergate or even the First Amendment. It was around before sociology and molecular biology and its genres are older than the novel or the orchestral symphony. Its traditions can be traced to the spread of literacy and the new social relationships furthered by the printing press. For better and for worse, it is intimately involved in the creation of a vernacular prose style as a democratic vehicle for comprehending daily life, and its role as public explainer, and scold, reaches forward from John Milton, that Puritan pamphleteer, to Samuel Johnson, William Hazlitt, Ida

Tarbell, George Orwell, H.L. Mencken, and, in our day, Mike Royko and Bill Moyers. Its claims for professional autonomy may not be as clear-cut as medicine or law, for example, but surely it has as rich a tradition and as great a social utility.

Shrewd journalists are wary of pretensions, including their own, yet they know that to ask "What is journalism?" is to ask a good and important question. Just as teaching and scholarship helped sort out what was astronomy and what astrology, what chemistry and what alchemy, so, too, Pulitzer clearly hoped that teaching and research would be an exercise in self-definition and self-criticism for journalism.

Could journalism education not help capture something more than a description of and training in currently accepted good practice? Are not journalism's principal intellectual affinities with law and history, political science and moral philosophy, and not with its current college of communications yokemates?



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### STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

Title of publication: *Columbia Journalism Review*  
Date of filing: October 1, 1991  
Frequency of issue: bimonthly  
Number of issues published annually: 6  
Annual subscription price: \$18.00  
Location of known office of publication: 700 Journalism Building, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027  
Location of headquarters or general business offices of the publisher: same as above  
Publisher: Joan Kommer, 709 Journalism Building, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027  
Editor: Suzanne Braun Levine; Managing Editor: Gloria Cooper, 700 Journalism Building, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027  
Owner: Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027  
Known bondholders, mortgages, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: none  
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes have not changed during the preceding 12 months.  
Extent and nature of circulation:

	Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months	Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date
A. Total no. copies printed	42,946	44,074
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1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales	2,388	2,595
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E. Total Distribution	36,181	38,883
F. Copies not distributed		
1. Office use, left over, unaccounted for, spoiled after printing	3,811	2,286
2. Return from news agents	2,954	2,905
G. TOTAL	42,946	44,074

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

Dennis F. Giza, Associate Publisher

## "Too journalistic to make a contribution"

BY DOUG UNDERWOOD

Here at the University of Washington, I've had good support from my colleagues who like the notion of ex-journalists teaching would-be journalists and who value my efforts at media criticism. But the adjustments for an ex-journalist on the tenure track at a large university can still be difficult. For example:

• **Publishing requirements** This can be a major barrier for ex-journalists who find themselves judged by the amount of "academic" publishing they've done. Although standards vary, the tenure track at many institutions is modelled on the publish-or-perish requirements traditionally imposed on faculty in the hard sciences. This means publishing in refereed journals, which means that the work is circulated to other academics who pass judgment anonymously on its scholarly contribution to knowledge in the field. For ex-journalists, the academic publishing game can present a bewildering maze of quantitative methods and social science jargon and the daunting prospect of running the gauntlet of peer judgment.

• **The writing of journalism** Ex-journalists are, for the most part, hired because their skills and real-world experience are valued in the training of future journalists. It would seem logical, then, that — to keep fresh and in touch with the business — they would be encouraged to continue to produce journalism. In fact, however, those who guard the gates of scholarly publishing are often quite hostile to what they consider the flabby generalizing of journalistic inquiry. Academics who have reviewed my work, for example, have faulted it for reading too much like "an extended feature story" and for lacking "qualitative and quantitative" analysis. I'm the first to admit that there are weaknesses in my work, but I've found

it frustrating to have my writing judged as "too journalistic to make a contribution," as one academic publisher put it.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors has joined with the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (the major academic journalism organization) to produce guidelines for what kind of publishing is considered acceptable for ex-journalists on the tenure track. Unfortunately, the concept that journalism should be treated as the equivalent of scholarship has been slow to find favor in academic circles.

• **Freedom ... and prudence** Academics cherish academic freedom as much as journalists do freedom of the press. However, as I see it, communications scholars don't do enough with their freedom — at least as measured by how often they criticize the media establishment. In the course of my own research, for example, I've run across few studies that take a hard look at how modern corporate management is reshaping the newspaper and the newsroom. This is probably no coincidence. F. Dennis Hale, a faculty member at Bowling Green State University, has pointed out that a comprehensive study of the impact of chain newspaper ownership on the quality of news hasn't been done. He speculates that such a study would have trouble finding funding because most sources — media foundations, university journalism programs, and the federal government — are beholden to newspaper conglomerates in one way or another.

At many universities, budget cuts and other financial pressures have put communications departments under great pressure to come up with private support for their programs. Sadly, this makes it even more difficult to do the sort of studies that might raise the hackles of the media powers that be. In my case, I've chosen to live with the tension of writing media criticism in publications like *CJR* while at the same time trying to run intern programs that depend on media support. But one can hardly blame communications faculty for focusing on the kind of research that — with its use of the muted and densely technical language of social science — is less likely to offend (or to be read outside academic circles). ♦

*Doug Underwood, a frequent contributor to *CJR*, is on the tenure track at the University of Washington in Seattle.*

# BOOKS

## MYTHS THAT MEN (AND THE MEDIA) LIVE BY

BY LESLIE BENNETTS

I came away from *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* feeling not only that it should be required reading for all Americans, but that every representative of any media organization in the country should be locked in a room until he or she has finished the last page. The unrelenting series of revelations provided by Susan Faludi's explosive and exhaustively researched new book is galvanizing enough for any citizen, let alone female; but for a journalist, *Backlash* is one long epiphany.

Faludi's analysis of the unthinking and utterly irresponsible contributions of the mass media to the aforementioned war is enough to make any journalist's blood run cold. There are precious few among us who are not guilty of buying into at least some of the unquestioned and, as Faludi makes clear, almost entirely erroneous assumptions the sheep-like herd has been purveying for so long these many years. On subjects relating to women, the performance of the national media during this period has all too often been a disgrace.

If Faludi's book were merely a polemic, however eloquent, one might disagree with such conclusions. But *Backlash* is a stunning work of reportage, complete with eighty pages of footnotes (including, I regret to say,

one citing a story by this reporter), and the sheer accumulation of facts makes many of its arguments virtually unsailable. Particularly shocking are the author's case studies of how the media played several important and emblematic stories about women and their lives. If she demonstrates in excruciating detail the extent to which lazy practitioners of the worst kind of trend journalism failed to do their own homework, no one can say Faludi didn't do hers.

The most famous case in point is the notorious Harvard-Yale study on women's marriage patterns, word of which hit the front pages, network news programs, and talk shows of America like a bombshell in 1986. The thrust of the study was that women who failed to marry young could basically kiss off their chance for marrying at all: the so-called "man shortage" was allegedly so severe that, as *Newsweek* so memorably put it, by the age of forty an unmarried woman was more likely to be killed by a terrorist than to find her way to the altar.

The numbers provided by the study, which was both unpublished and unfinished, were chilling indeed. The only problem was that they weren't true — something that virtually nobody managed to report, although a single telephone call to the U.S. Census Bureau might quickly have indicated that something was amiss. Even a cursory check of population charts reveals that there were substantially more bachelors than unwed women in the age groups in question. "If anyone faced a shortage of potential spouses, it was *men* in the prime marrying years," Faludi notes. When a Census Bureau demographer named Jeanne Moorman recalculated the study's figures, she found that at the age of thirty, a college-educated woman who hadn't yet married had three times the chance posited by the Harvard-Yale report; at the age of thirty-five, her odds of getting married were seven times higher than those predicted in the study; and at forty, her shot at wedlock was twenty-three times higher than the study had indicated.

Unfortunately, no one seemed to want to hear that the study was wrong — and when Moorman started talking to the press, Reagan administration offi-

cials clamped down and ordered her not to discuss the marriage study because it was "too controversial." (She was told to work instead on a study "about how poor unwed mothers abuse the welfare system.") However, Moorman completed her own analysis of marriage patterns and released it — but, as Faludi notes, "The media relegated it to the inside pages, when they reported it at all."

Within the field of demography, the Harvard-Yale study received so much criticism about its methodology and conclusions that by the time it was finally published three years later its authors had decided to leave out the infamous statistics about the "marriage crunch." But by then, of course, the damage was done: the perception of a bleak and lonely future facing the millions of working women who had foolishly delayed marriage in favor of career was firmly established in the national consciousness. As Faludi

**BACKLASH: THE UNDECLARED WAR AGAINST AMERICAN WOMEN**  
BY SUSAN FALUDI  
CROWN PUBLISHERS. 552 PP. \$24

demonstrates, the media had succeeded not in reporting the news but in making it. Before the Harvard-Yale study was publicized, most attitudinal surveys found a high level of contentment and little anxiety about marriage among single women. But within a year of that terrifying blast of publicity, the proportion of all single women who feared they would never marry had nearly doubled, according to one yearly indicator, the Annual Study of Women's Attitudes. The barrage of warnings had succeeded in inspiring a tremendous level of distress among women who — until they found themselves assailed at every turn by dire pronouncements that they had made a terrible mistake and might already have ruined their lives forever — had been quite happy with their choices.

Equally instructive is Faludi's comparison of the difference between the way the media played the work of two social scientists — one overtly hostile to women's independence, the other sympathetic. When Shere Hite published the results of her national survey on sexuality and relationships, *Women*

Leslie Bennetts, who was a reporter for The New York Times for ten years, is a contributing editor at Vanity Fair magazine.

and Love: A Cultural Revolution in Progress, she was immediately ripped to shreds by the press, which seemed more interested in "attacking Hite personally," as Faludi puts it, than in any evenhanded treatment of her findings. To be sure, the results of Hite's inquiry were guaranteed to make many men uncomfortable: she found that most women were upset about the refusal of the men in their lives to treat them as equals, and about the domestic friction that resulted as they sought some respect. "Hite's findings were largely held up for ridicule, not inspection," Faludi states.

The treatment was very different for a man with opposing views. "At the same time the press was pillorying Hite for suggesting that male resistance might be partly responsible for women's grief, it was applauding another social scientist whose theory — that women's equality was to blame for contemporary women's anguish — was more consonant with backlash thinking," Faludi continues. Dr. Srully Blotnick, a *Forbes* magazine columnist and self-appointed media "expert," con-

cluded that success at work "poisons both the professional and personal lives of women." His survey was widely and favorably reported by the national media. No one questioned his methodology, in contrast to the ferocious attacks on Hite's approach. This was unfortunate because, although Blotnick claimed his was a groundbreaking twenty-five year longitudinal study, he would have been only seventeen years old when he purportedly began his data collection. The "Dr." title he had adopted "turned out to be the product of a mail-order degree from an unaccredited correspondence school," Faludi reports. When a *U.S. News & World* reporter finally investigated Blotnick's credentials, it was discovered that "almost nothing on his résumé checked out" — but *U.S. News* never published that story. It was only after New York State launched a criminal fraud investigation against Blotnick that *Forbes* finally discontinued his column. News of Blotnick's fall from grace, however, was almost completely ignored by the press. As with the Harvard-Yale marriage study, the flaws in Blotnick's

argument were never publicized, his conclusions never exposed as propaganda rather than legitimate social science. Because his "findings" confirmed pre-existing negative biases about working women during the backlash era, the media never bothered to check out their validity or his credibility.

An even more egregious example of media malfeasance was provided by the treatment accorded a French study on what seemed to be a sudden and dramatic epidemic of infertility among women over thirty. *The New York Times* played the story on page one, praising the report as "unusually large and rigorous" and "more reliable" than previous studies that had indicated a considerably later onset of fertility problems among most women. The alarmist new study spawned not only the familiar round of national media attention but also a subsequent onslaught of books about women's "biological clock," not to mention a steady escalation in the fear-some statistics. "A self-help book was soon reporting that women in their thirties now faced a 'shocking 68 percent' chance of infertility — and promptly

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faulted the feminists, who had failed to advise women of the biological drawbacks of a successful career," Faludi reports.

However, the scare stories conveniently omitted a few salient facts. The patients used in the French study were all married to completely sterile men — hardly a representative sampling of the population — and were trying to get pregnant through artificial insemination in a process using frozen sperm, which is far less potent than fresh sperm. The study also pronounced as infertile any woman who was not pregnant after only a year of trying — a ridiculous cut-off, since it takes even newlyweds a mean time of eight months to conceive (and another study found that fully 80 percent of couples who failed to conceive after one year eventually succeeded). Indeed, although the national media had given the French study their uncritical approval, experts in the field debunked it so thoroughly that its own authors finally announced apologetically that they "never meant their findings to apply to all women."

But as usual with such sagas, it was too late. As Faludi observes, "Neither their retreat nor their peers' disparaging assessments attracted press attention." Nor did a nationwide fertility survey of 8,000 women later released by the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, which found that infertility had actually declined slightly, not only among women in their thirties but even among women in their forties. Thanks to the shoddy performance of the press, American women had once again been needlessly terrorized by a grossly flawed report that, because it confirmed a reactionary stereotype that the punishment for uppity women who delay childbirth was the probability of forfeiting it entirely, received virtually no critical scrutiny whatsoever.

It would be comforting if examples like the ones cited above were the exception rather than the rule, but *Backlash* is full of them. And even in the sections dealing with the offenses committed against women by institutions other than media outlets, the press often played an important role in helping to promote those offenses. Susan Faludi has laid it all out in sickening detail. Now that she'd done the hard

work of ferreting out the truths that battalions of her peers had failed even to look for, it will be instructive indeed to see whether the major media organizations repeatedly cited in her reporting actually do anything to improve their coverage on such politically charged subjects as women's rights. Judging by past performance, I wouldn't bet the ranch.

## A PRIZE-WINNING LIE

BY PETE HAMILL

The engine of this novel is an agonizing professional dilemma: What does a journalist do about a major story that he discovers is based on lying sources?

This happens more often in the practice of our imprecise craft than we like to admit. Political reporters should assume that most of their sources, from the president down, are lying — either directly or by omission. During the fighting of wars, generals and their flacks almost always lie, saving the truth for their memoirs (which are, of course, always briefs for the defense). But the Unreliable Source is also a figure of more mundane events. Years ago, I published a column based on a horrific story related to me by a man in east Harlem; three weeks later someone sent me a copy of a thirty-year-old short story on which the lie was based. My friend Jimmy Breslin once wrote a column about a New Yorker who escaped from a burning office and then proudly told Breslin about his cool heroism and need for job; the next day, this splendid hero was arrested for arson for setting the building on fire. Every editor in America could tell similar stories. They are the stuff of great hilarity in newspaper bars.

Most of these inadvertently transmitted lies are innocent enough, with few

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*Pete Hamill is a columnist for the New York Post and the author, most recently, of the novel Loving Women.*

serious consequences. But in *Just Cause*, John Katzenbach raises the ante. His protagonist, Matthew Cowart, is a former reporter reduced to the daily boredom of writing editorials for a newspaper called the *Miami Journal* (Katzenbach was a fine reporter for *The Miami Herald*). He is divorced, living in a dreadful loveless solitude; even in the communal world of the newsroom, he has no friends. And his ex-wife has taken his daughter to live with her new husband in Tampa. Each day slides into the next and the banal terrors of middle-age lie directly ahead.

Then he receives a letter from a convict on Death Row. It appears to be another sample of that familiar newspaper category "jail mail," in which the absolute innocence of the correspondent is angrily proclaimed. Cowart is, of course, skeptical; as a reporter he had covered too many homicides, too many trials, "but he could not recall someone

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### JUST CAUSE

BY JOHN KATZENBACH  
PUTNAM, 432 PP. \$22.95

genuinely innocent." Still, something in the tone of the letter — "articulate, educated, and sophisticated" — intrigues Cowart. He looks at the meager clips. The crime is one of those American atrocities: a young girl raped and butchered and left in a swamp in northern Florida. But to Cowart the horror of the crime is at odds with the intelligence of the letter. Cowart is intrigued. He wonders whether he still has the legs to be a reporter. He gets permission to go off and investigate.

He then does what appears to be a splendid job of reporting. In prison, he interviews Robert Earl Ferguson, the young black man who wrote the letter, and follows a number of his leads. He confirms the lack of physical evidence: footprints at the site, the weapon, blood-stained clothing. He is convinced that the original defense attorney did a second-rate job. He notes evidence of old-fashioned racism (the murdered girl is white). He discovers that the arresting officers — one of whom is black — did use physical force to extract a confession, as claimed by Ferguson. Then a serial killer on the same Death Row tells Cowart that he, not Ferguson, killed the little girl, a tale apparently

confirmed when the serial killer sends him to a culvert to recover the knife used in the killing.

That seems to be enough. Cowart writes several major stories and they cause a sensation. Ferguson is freed. Cowart has produced one of those classic "wrong man" stories beloved of journalism-awards jurists and the awards flow to Cowart, up to and including the Pulitzer Prize.

And then he discovers that his great Pulitzer Prize-winning story was all based on lies. The Ferguson character lied. So did the serial murderer, who gleefully reveals his deception to Cowart just before his own execution. A killer has been released to the streets and the reporter put him there.

Clearly, Cowart should go immediately to his editors and tell them what he knows, or suspects. He doesn't. Instead, he lies. And, holed up in his apartment, he begins to rationalize his lies. "The newspaper suddenly no longer seemed a place of sanctuary, but instead a swamp or a minefield." He

remembers how William F. Buckley was taken in by Edgar Smith, how Norman Mailer was blamed for helping free Jack Abbott. "I'm not the first reporter to make an error, he thought.

## A killer has been released to the streets and the reporter put him there

It's a high-risk profession. The stakes are always tough. No reporter is immune from a carefully executed deception." All true. But he doesn't act on such sentiments. Pride and ego divert him, along with that sickening disease that now infects all modern newsrooms:

careerism. A proud craftsman admits a mistake; the careerist wonders first and last how it will affect *him* and his precious march to the heights.

Cowart thinks: "The only way he could protect himself, his reputation, and his career, was to conceal Ferguson's role." He knows this means, for the moment, allowing the killer to roam freely. "For a single instant, he considered simply telling the truth about everything, but, in the same instant, he wondered, What was the truth?" And at another point: "He no longer knew whether what he'd done compounded truth or lies. He realized that for the first time in his years as a journalist, he had no idea which was which, they had become so tangled in his head."

This crisis happens at the half-way point in the novel. The second part of the story is about Cowart's attempt to redeem himself, as he joins with the police to bring Ferguson back to justice. The drama is transformed into melodrama, some of it quite scary. But the ethical dilemma is never quite resolved. In some ways, the second half of the novel resembles those scenes in horror movies in which the lone woman decides to climb into the attic to face the nameless beast, instead of dialing 911 or simply running into the street. The thriller writer's essential task is to get the reader to suspend disbelief. For me, that doesn't happen. If Cowart truly cared about the consequences of his prize-winning mistake, he should have immediately gone into print, thus warning various police departments and saving the lives of new victims. This doesn't seem a genuine choice for Cowart until his own daughter is mentioned by Ferguson as a possible victim.

Still, he doesn't make that choice. He plays cop instead. That's an inescapable requirement of the suspense genre, of course, and if Katzenbach's protagonist had simply come clean, there'd have been no novel. Or rather, there would have been no thriller. There might have been another kind of novel, perhaps a more disturbing and scary one. It's unfair to criticize a writer of Katzenbach's skill for not writing the novel you wish he had written. But in this long, sometimes bloated thriller, a leaner, darker, more disturbing novel seems aching to come out. ♦

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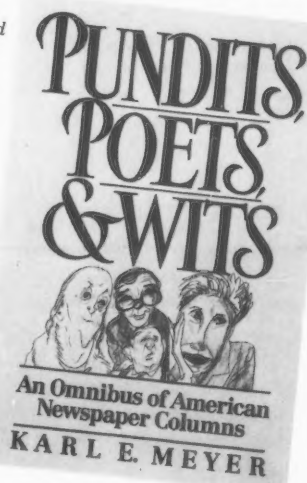
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# The Lower case



## *Gorbachev's Pleas for Aid Not Expected to Bear Fruit*

*The New York Times* 5/24/91

**Drug firm ordered  
to supply women**

*The Sacramento Bee* 11/8/91

**Japanese  
race appears  
reduced to 3**

*Centre Daily Times* (State College, Pa.) 10/6/91

## **Poor bear brunt of health budget cuts**

*The Seattle Times* 11/23/91

**Teen-ager dies defending gift  
of gold earrings from muggers**

*Springfield (Mo.) News-Leader* 10/24/91

**Suicides asked to reconsider**

*The Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, Miss.) 10/28/91

During her 20s, Ms. Reed also briefly worked in the newspaper business while continuing her anchor-reporter job at KYTV. Her then husband's business was buying small, failing newspapers and turning them around.

When the marriage ended, so did her career in journalism. And at age 29, Ms. Reed became KYTV's news director.

*Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch* 10/9/91

**Press  
tours  
ravaged  
city**

*The Press Democrat* (Santa Rosa, Calif.) 11/22/91

**Lawmaker  
backs train  
through Iowa**

*The Des Moines Register* 1/24/91

**Police Act  
To Stop  
Urinating  
In Public**

*Winston-Salem (N.C.) Journal* 10/12/91

**PRIDE IN THE PANHANDLE**

## **Body found in back yard**

*The Sunday Star-Herald* (Scottsbluff-Gering, Nebr.) 11/24/91

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